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ABSTRACT

With the reform of 1877-1885 and the subsequent expansion of higher education, the formal Napoleonic structure of the French university gave birth to an essentially new system. A historical study examines the origins and prewar evolutions of that phase of the development of French higher education begun by the reforms of the 1880's. The foremost concern is with the Faculty of Letters, although other areas are referred to. Attention is focused on three paramount issues: (1) the social relations of higher educaton, including the functions it has fulfilled for society alone and for certain groups within it; (2) the organizational structure and the way that relationships within it affected the development of higher education; and (3) the role of the universities in creating and disseminating basic scientific and cultural knowledge. The starting point is the condition of the letters faculty at the end of the Second Empire and the growing realization of their inadequacies. The institutional structure of the university on the eve of reform is analysed. The reform movement that largely shaped the transformation of higher education is examined, and an account of the actual course of reform given. The evolution of French higher education in the generation following reform is charted, and two contrasting contemporary evaluations of the French system are compared to illustrate the impasse it had reached by 1914. (Author/MSE)

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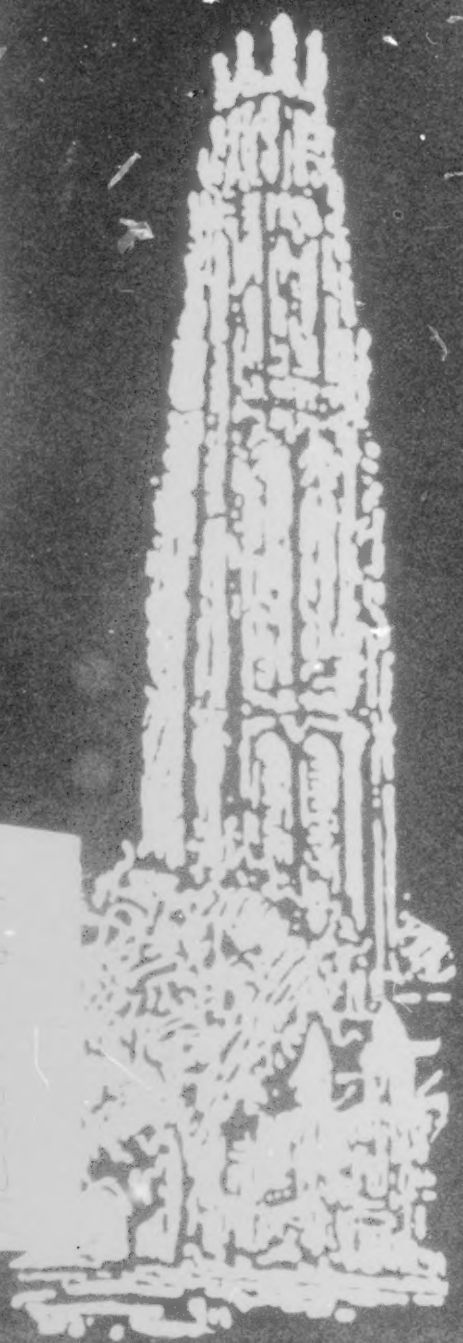

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REFORM AND RESTRAINT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE, 1865-1914

by

Roger L. Geiger*

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CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION,
1865-1914

1808 (17 mars)	Faculties established by Napoleon I
1863-69	Victor Duruy, Minister of Public Instruction
1864 (1 mai)	article by Ernest Renan criticizing French Higher Education
1868 (31 juillet)	Decree founding Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes
1870-73	Jules Simon, Minister of Public Instruction
1873 (25 mars)	Decree establishing Comité Consultatif
(25 mars)	Law re-est. Conseil Supérieur de l'Instruction Public
1875 (12 juillet)	Law est. Liberté de l'enseignement supérieur
(22 déc)	Decree regularizing professorial salaries (eff. 1877)
1876-77	William-Henri Waddington, Minister of Public Instruction
1877 (3 nov.)	Arrêté creating 300 scholarships for the licence Maîtres de conférence created
1878	Société pour l'étude des questions d'enseignement supérieur Albert Dumont replaces du Mesnil
1878, 1879	libraries est. for each group of Faculties
1879	full republican control (Chamber, Senate, presidency) Jules Ferry Minister of Public Instruction (2/79 - 11/81; 1/82 - 8/82; 2/83 - 11/83)
1880 (27 fev)	Law reforming Conseil Sup. (only representatives of education as members)
(18 mars)	mixed juries suppressed (monopoly of state faculty) inscription fees abolished (re-est. in 1887)
(1 oct.)	scholarships created for the agrégation .
(25 déc.)	licence reformed to create specialties
1881	Revue internationale d'enseignement founded
1883 (24 juillet)	Decree authorizing cours libres
1884	death of Albert Dumont, Directeur de l'ens. sup. Louis Liard becomes new director

1885 (25 juillet)	Decree est. civil personality of Faculties
(28 déc.)	Decree organizing Faculties: Conseil Générale des Facultés (under rector) Conseil de la Faculté (prof. titulaires) Assemblée de la Faculté (all teachers with doctorat)
1886	diplôme d'études supérieures est. at Sorbonne
1889 (17 juillet)	Finance Law creates separate Faculty budgets
1889-1905	reduced military service for licence holders
1890-92	Bourgeois proposal to create univ. blocked (Senate)
1893 (28 avril)	Finance Law creating "corps des facultés" with civil personality
(31 déc.)	PCN est. in Faculty of Sciences to precede licence (certificat d'études physiques, chemiques et naturelles)
1894 (28 juillet)	DES required for agrégation in history (Diplôme d'études supérieures)
1896 (22 jan.)	licence-ès-sciences to comprise three certificats
(10 juillet)	Law making "corps des fac." into universities
1899	parliamentary enquête into baccalauréat
1902	reform of baccalauréat (equivalence of Modern and Class.)
1903 (10 nov.)	Ecole Normale Supérieure merged with Sorbonne
1904	DES required for all agrégations in letters (eff. 1907)
1907	separate licence-ès-lettres est. for philosophy, history, etc.
1920 (31 juillet)	new constitution for universities: instituts poss. licence-ès-lettres to comprise four certificats

REFORM AND RESTRAINT IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE 1865-1914

When French students mounted the barricades in May, 1968, they inaugurated a chain of events which effectively terminated a venerable, but superannuated institution--the Napoleonic Université. In the one hundred and sixty years since its formal promulgation by Napoleon I it had naturally undergone considerable change. From the Empire to the beginning of the Third Republic the formal Napoleonic structure, insofar as it concerned higher education in Letters and Sciences, possessed few students or professors, and changed only occasionally with the vicissitudes of national political upheavals. With the reforms of 1877-1885 and the subsequent expansion of higher education, this framework gave birth to an essentially new system. It was this system that was strained beyond its limits by the spectacular demographic increase in higher education after World War II. After all expediants had failed to rectify its structural weaknesses, it was repudiated in the Orientation Law that followed the disorders of 1968.

This study will examine the origins and pre-war evolution of that phase of the development of French higher education begun by the reforms of the 1880s. Its foremost concern will be with the Faculties of Letters, but reference will frequently be made to other areas. The Letters Faculties shared a common set of problems with their colleagues in science; in other respects they were rivals of the Law Faculties. Considerations of the demography of higher education require that enrolments in all the Faculties be taken into account. The focus of attention will be on three

paramount issues: the social relations of higher education, including the functions it fulfilled for society as a whole and those it provided for certain groups within it; the organizational structure, and the way in which relationships within it affected the development of higher education; and, the role of the universities in creating and disseminating basic scientific and cultural knowledge.

The starting point will be the condition of the Letters Faculties at the end of the Second Empire and the growing realization of their inadequacies (Part I). The institutional structure of the Université on the eve of reform will then be analysed (Part II). The reform movement which largely shaped the transformation of French higher education will be examined (Part III), followed by an account of the actual course of reform (Part IV). Next, the evolution of French higher education in the generation following reform will be charted in each of the three areas indicated above. Finally, two contrasting contemporary evaluations of French higher education will be compared to illustrate the impass it had reached by 1914 (Part VI).

Part I

In 1865, when the need to reform the Imperial Université established by Napoleon I were first being felt, the Faculty of Letters at Bordeaux consisted of five professors who supervised nine officially inscribed students.[1] As such, it was typical of the Letters Faculties in each of the 5 provincial Academies: all had identical chairs in philosophy, history, ancient literature, French literature and "foreign" literature; while the number of nominal students ranged from a low of two (Toulouse, Rennes, Nancy, Montpellier and Grenoble) up to twelve (Douai).[2] Paris possessed a more diversified Faculty of eleven, but even they could attract only 40 students. To complete this picture reference must be made to the Ecole Normale Supérieure, where more than one hundred science and letters students were given their three-year preparation for teaching careers by 23 instructors, 14 of whom were in letters. The paucity of higher education in letters is certainly surprising for a country of 38 millions, and all the more so for one of the world's most literate and culturally-advanced societies. The number of students in letters was also meager in comparison with the Faculties of Law and Medicine. Nearly 5000 students inscribed in the former, while close to 1800 students prepared for careers in medicine. The Faculties of Science, on the other hand, were as badly off as Letters, with a slightly greater number of

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[1] Basic information about the Faculties in Part I is taken from Statistique de l'enseignement supérieur, 4 vol. (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1868-98); henceforth abreviated SES I, etc.

[2] The student "inscriptions," rather than allowing them to follow courses, actually ecused them from the requirement of following courses before their licence examination. Thus, in a sense, there were no actual students outside of the Ecole Normale Supérieur. Cf. Antoine Prost, L'Enseignement en France, 1800-1967, (Paris: 1968), pp. 227, 241.

professors, but even fewer students.

From this overview it might seem that professional education was flourishing under the Second Empire, while science and the liberal arts languished. Such a dichotomy, however, is misleading. For, insofar as the Faculties of Sciences and Letters were devoted to higher education, they were designed to certify candidates for the teaching profession. The first degree these Faculties awarded, the licence, was technically a licencia docenti, giving its holder the right to teach in the collèges or lycées of French secondary education. On a more advanced level, the agrégation was a competitive examination (concours) which gave access to the preferred teaching positions in the lycées. The Letters Faculties did not exist to instruct their few inscribed students, but rather to examine them for their degrees. In 1865 the 86 chairholders in Letters examined 262 licence candidates and found 90 worthy to pass. Only at the Ecole Normale Supérieure were there actual courses to help prepare students for their examinations. The typical candidate, however, had none of the advantages of those privileged Normaliens. He would probably be a maître répétiteur in a collège, who had to prepare himself for the licence examination that might bring him a more secure and less poorly paid position.

The principle task of the Faculties of Letters did not even involve higher education per se: it was to form the examining juries for the baccalauréat degree which certified the successful completion of secondary education. It was this function, in fact, which required that each Académie have a Faculty of Letters, and that each Faculty would have at least

the five chairs listed above.[1] The task of conducting the baccalauréat examinations, more than any other factor, determined the structure of French higher education in letters as well as in science. The magnitude of this enterprise dwarfed the higher examinations: 9110 candidates were examined in 1865, and 4097 managed to pass (a typical percentage). The fees for these exams were also an integral part of the system, at least until the next decade: in 1865 they augmented the fixed salaries of the professors by an average of more than 50%. The degree to which higher education in letters was dependent upon secondary education will become more evident in the course of this study. However, the basis of this relationship lay in the Faculties of Letters function of certifying both the teachers and the graduates of the secondary system.

The Faculties of Sciences and Letters had another task which was ostensibly more in keeping with the designation higher education: this was providing lecture courses that were open to the interested public. However, the nature and the significance of this institution are difficult to assess. Critics have charged that the absence of serious purpose among the "auditeurs bénévoles" debased the level of these courses and corrupted the professors who pandered to their tastes. The attendance figures for these lectures seem to reveal another dimension to this phenomenon. The most popular subject in the Faculties was Chemistry, followed closely by History and Physics. The popularity of the sciences suggests that a genuine desire for edification co-existed with the imputed demand for respectable entertainment. However, the Faculties of Letters and Sciences

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[1] This condition was only fully implemented by the Decree of 22 August, 1854; A. de Beauchamp, ed. Recueil des lois et règlements sur l'enseignement supérieur, 6 vol. (Paris: 18 -19), II, 340.

were poorly adapted to satisfy the intellectual curiosity that evidently existed in French society.

It should now be apparent that the Bordeaux Faculty of Letters had more to do than minister to its nine putative students. Still, its situation must appear incongruous to anyone accustomed to associating such institutions with advanced instruction or the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. In fact, there was no instruction for students, and original scholarship was quite irrelevant to the central task of supervising a rigidly prescribed program of examinations. The predominance of this latter function was reflected in the recruitment of professors, who were generally promoted from the ranks of lycée teachers on the basis of seniority more often than for their intellectual attainments.

The paucity of scholarly activity in the Faculties of Letters was more a result of circumstance than design. The Imperial Decree originally creating the Faculties (17 Mars 1808) had charged them with "l'étude des sciences approfondies" as well as "la collation des grades" [conferring degrees]. It was the Second Empire more than the First that was responsible for the complete predominance of the latter function over the former. Napoleon III, aware of the opposition within the Université to his seizure of autocratic power, placed higher education under the same rigid control as other French institutions. Under the vindictive Ministry of Fortoul, appointed on the morrow of the coup d'état, and later given absolute powers over education, intellectual fetters were placed over higher education in the name of order and discipline.[1] Controls were established over every

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[1] Louis Liard, L'Enseignement supérieur en France, 1789-1893, 2 vol. (Paris: 1894), II.

detail of the curriculum, over the prayers required of the Normaliens, and even over the amount of facial hair that was appropriate for a teacher. Those professors deemed likely to be recalcitrant to these controls were immediately revoked. Many others whose devotion to the regime was considered questionable were forced to resign after several demotions.[1] This policy had the double effect of removing much of the best talent from higher education, and effectively denying basic intellectual freedom to those who remained. To assist this latter effort, philosophy was removed entirely from the curriculum, so that even the temptation of heterodox ideas would be eliminated. The conscious purpose of this policy was to debase higher education, and the Letters Faculties in particular: that is, they were intended to be mere transmittors of existing knowledge, rather than participants in the scientific enterprise. Their devotion was to be to the pedagogical ends of the lycées, and not the creation of knowledge. Insofar as research was accommodated in the Université of Napoleon III, it was the special province of the Collège de France, the Muséum d'histoire naturelle, the Observatoire impérial, and other institutions established for the patronage of research with no authorization to grant degrees. Although these institutions were less vulnerable to the kind of intellectual impoverishment experienced by the Faculties, the material impoverishment of the Université considerably limited their efforts throughout the Second Empire.

To evaluate the impact of Napoleon III on French higher education

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[1] Andre Canivez, Jules Lagneau, professeur de philosophie: essai sur la condition du professeur de philosophie jusqu'à la fin du XIXe siècle, 2 vol. (Paris: 1865), I, 178-92.

one need only to glance across the Rhine. In the Germanic universities during the 1850s the successful marriage of teaching and research was already producing impressive results. By the 1860s the achievements of German scholarship made the superiority of their universities evident to the rest of the world. France during this same period regressed significantly: instruction was further divorced from research; specialization was discouraged; intellectual resources were dispersed instead of concentrated; and whatever individual creativity survived these institutional discouragements was further inhibited by the penury affecting the entire system. More than any other single factor, the disparity between French and German higher education that became obvious in the 1860s caused concern within the government and the public about the condition of the French Université.

Public awareness of this issue seems to date from an 1864 article on higher education by Ernest Renan, one of France's most respected penseurs.[1] Beginning within the broad framework of the relationship of science and the state in a democratic society, Renan soon focused on a specific critique of French educational institutions. The public lectures of the French Faculties, he charged, were antithetical to the needs of serious scholarship. They had made French teaching "less like the teaching of the 4th or 5th century rhetoricians." The intellectual life of Paris often obscured these deficiencies, but the provincial Faculties were veritable "deserts." The consequence of this, Renan emphasized, was the

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[1] "L'Enseignement supérieur en France, son histoire et son avenir", Revue des Deux Mondes, (1 Mai 1864). Cf. the assessments of Albert Duruy, L'instruction publique et la démocratie, (Paris: 1886), 255-59; and Prost, (p. 228), who mistakenly dates an 1868 article by Louis Pasteur on this theme as preceding Renan's seminal piece.

inferiority of French science to that nurtured in the Germanic universities. Renan was especially concerned about the "historical and philological sciences" which were the foundation of advanced literary education across the Rhine, but badly neglected in France. In arguing the significance of this issue, Renan was perhaps the first to articulate an argument which was to become one of the dominant themes in later discussions of French higher education: that the moral and material welfare of France were both closely related to the cultivation and propagation of science within institutions of higher learning. Two years later, after Prussia's surprising defeat of Austria, Renan stated this more forcefully: "The university makes the school. It has been said that the Prussian schoolmaster won the battle of Sadova. No, what won the battle was German science...[and] German philosophy... The instruction of the people is dependent upon the advanced culture of certain classes."[1] By this date, however, some of Renan's concern was already shared in the Ministry of Public Instruction.

The severity of the Napoleonic regime was mollified considerably after 1860 as the Second Empire entered its liberal phase. However, the most decisive break in educational policy came with the appointment of Victor Duruy to head the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1863. Formerly an historian, Duruy was sensitive to the ideals of academic scholarship. He also was a strong supporter of the prerogatives of the state in education--a position that provoked clerical opposition, and eventually caused his dismissal in 1869. Finally, he was an enterprising and energetic

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[1] Questions contemporaines, (Paris: 1868), vii.

administrator who undertook to rectify the deficiencies of the Université as soon as they became apparent. His reaction to Renan's indictment was characteristic. He began gathering information about higher education in the countries surrounding France, especially the German states; and he launched an extensive inquiry into the condition of French institutions (Statistique de l'enseignement supérieur, 1868).[1] The conclusions that he drew from this information, however, reveal the limitations of the educational vision of the Second Empire.

Underlying Duruy's policy there was a fundamental dichotomy between teaching and research. There were two different kinds of savants, he wrote: "some are capable of making discoveries in science, or lasting works in letters; others devote themselves to popularizing the discoveries and masterpieces. Accordingly, for the Government, [there is] a duty to assure to the former the best means of producing; to the latter, the best means of teaching."[2] Thus, Duruy was unwilling to challenge the structural dichotomy of French higher education between institutions of research and the faculties whose functions related to teaching. Nevertheless, he clearly perceived the debility of France's research institutions.

For Duruy it was one of "the most legitimate ambitions" of the state that French science be pre-eminant.[3] That it had clearly been surpassed in several areas by German science in particular was therefore a cause for national concern. He concluded from his enquête that existing French

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[1] Duruy, 259. The result was the Statistique de l'enseignement supérieur cited in note #1.

[2] SES I, ix.

[3] SES I, 711.

institutions were inadequate for the needs of contemporary science, and that elsewhere (i.e. Germany) science was receiving considerably more material support. His solution to the problem, then, was to create a new institution for the patronage of scientific research. This policy was brought to fruition by the creation of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in 1868.

The Ecole was designed to furnish proven scholars with the equivalent of institutes where they could pursue their studies and initiate a select group of followers into the practice (hence, "pratique") of their discipline. It consequently was grafted onto existing institutions, almost exclusively in Paris, where the Directeurs d'études held positions. The four original sections of the Ecole were, 1) Mathematics, 2) Physics and Chemistry, 3) Natural History and Physiology, and 4) History and Philology. A fifth section devoted to Political Economy was created the next year, but was never put into operation. After the supression of the Paris Faculty of Theology in the 1880s the fifth section was consecrated to the study of religion and ethnology. The Ecole was open to whomever wanted to attend on a probationary basis, but the certificat of study that it awarded carried no special rights and no obvious type of employment. Duruy, somewhat paradoxically, combined his appreciation of the institutional requirements of scholarship with an amateuristic image of scholars. He later desribed the Ecole as created for "young men devoted to research and evolution without concern for a career."[1] In his justification of the Ecole to the Emperor he vaguely asserted that those Ecole graduates

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[1] Duruy, 264.

who sought work would find some niche in the Université. The only specific career open to Ecole students required earning a Doctorat d'État to become eligible for a chair, but this arduous path was obviously only for the most outstanding pupils.

In its structure and in its conception of scientific training the Ecole perpetuated the dichotomy between research and teaching within the Université. It nevertheless invigorated several fields by providing desperately needed resources and an important organizational framework. Investments in basic knowledge do not quickly yield dividends, but the Ecole immediately won and retained the appreciation of French academicians. Twenty five years later Louis Liard could write that,"no institution has contributed more to the progress of science and methodology. None also has contributed more to spreading the scientific renown of France abroad."[1] The acclaim accorded to Duruy for this initiative by later reformers is in one sense ironic, because the logic of his approach precluded any re-evaluation of the role of the Faculties.

Duruy expressed his general view of conditions when he wrote to the Emperor "that the organization of our higher education required no great reforms. The edifice is old, but solidly based," he concluded.[2] He defended the public lectures that Renan had deplored as important contributions to the intellectual vitality of French society. He recognized the desirability of having actual students in the provincial Letters and Sciences Faculties, but not out of any wish to emulate German universities. Rather, he proposed to make them "Ecoles normales secondaires" which would

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[1] Liard, II.

[2] SES I, viii.

offer preparatory courses (conférences) for the licence examinations. In other words, to find students for these Faculties Duruy was willing to tie their functions more closely still to secondary education. So, Duruy was not only content with the roles of the Faculties, but he thought that they were accomplishing their tasks tolerably well. Although the first judgement is understandable in the context of the times, there is good reason to regard the second as excessively complacent.

There existed in France during Duruy's tenure of office a remarkable public thirst for education at all levels. When regulations were eased on adult courses and "cours libres," both offerings and enrollments mushroomed.[1] In secondary education the number of baccalauréats conferred in letters doubled from 1855 to 1865 (2055 to 4097). This larger population of bacheliers was reflected in enrollments in the Faculties of Law, but not those of Letters. During the same period the number of licences in letters awarded hovered below one hundred. Subsequently the efforts of Duruy raised this figure slightly; but it was still evident that the Faculties of Letters, and also the Faculties of Sciences, did not share the general demand for education. The most serious consequence of this situation was its effect upon the secondary schools that these faculties were ostensibly serving. The scarcity of licenciés and agrégés to teach in the lycées and collèges communaux forced them to employ underqualified teachers possessing only baccalauréats. This produced a recruitment crisis which persisted into the Third Republic, and tended to lower the quality of the faculty.[2]

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[1] Prost, 183; SFS I, 703-05.

[2] Paul Gerbod, La Condition universitaire en France au XIXe siècle, (Paris: 1965), 421-26; 567-70.

Thus, the problems facing French higher education in letters and science were much more fundamental than Duruy would admit. In comparison with foreign universities, the French Faculties had for the most part ceased to be repositories of advanced knowledge, and no longer were capable of playing a vital role in the transmission of current learning. But in some ways more damning was the fact that Faculties had become incapable of fulfilling their primary function within the Université of providing professors for secondary education. A government commission examining higher education shortly after Duruy's dismissal (1870) fully appreciated the severity of the problem. "The system adopted 60 years ago for the discipline of higher education," they wrote, "has constituted a permanent cause for its decadence and enfeeblement, for which it would be advisable to undertake a prompt and energetic remedy."[1] What that remedy ought to be, however, was not yet clear. By the time the Second Empire reached its inglorious finish in 1870 a consensus was emerging on the necessity of reforming French higher education, but it would be another decade before the direction of that reform would be fixed. In order to understand how that decision was reached it is necessary to examine first the organizational structure of the system during the intervening decade, and then the reform movement that resolved to change it.

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[1] Quoted in Liard, II, 336n. The Guizot Commission was investigating the possibility of ending the state monopoly in higher education (liberté d'enseignement supérieur). This course was widely debated from the late 1860s until its adoption in 1873. It was primarily favored by the Church, but many liberals thought the state system would benefit from competition.

Part II

The basic components of French higher education after 1870 can be most easily visualized by distinguishing three levels of authority. At the top of the system political authority was lodged in the Chamber of Deputies. This power was actually exercised by the Council of Ministers, where responsibility for educational matters was confided to the Minister of Public Instruction. At the base of the system were the professors of the various Faculties who provided the actual instruction and certification. The intermediate level connecting the summit and the base was the administrative machinery supervised by the Minister. The basic administrative structure had been devised under Napoleon I to maintain firm governmental control over educational matters; and during the Second Empire, it has already been seen, his nephew utilized this machinery in the same spirit. However, with the Third Republic provisions began to be made for influence to flow the other way--for the views of the professors in the Faculties to have the possibility of reaching the Minister and affecting administrative decisions. The political, professional and pedagogical views of the professoriate consequently became a significant ingredient in the renovation of French higher education.

It will become evident in the following section that a majority of the faculty, particularly in letters, was reformist by the early 1880s. This consensus, however, may have been as much a product of the controversy over reform as a cause of it. When the Faculties were asked by the Ministry in 1875 to express their views on the issue of universities and related questions, their responses revealed little consistency or even

concern.[1] The Faculties of Sciences, for example, agreed that candidates for chairs should be evaluated by specialists in their particular fields, but their colleagues in letters did not share their commitment to this important issue. The Faculties of Nancy submitted to the Ministry detailed and carefully thought-out recommendations for reorganizing French higher education; however, those of the Faculties of Bordeaux reveal little beyond an inordinate ambition, and the Paris Faculty of Letters barely deigned to answer at all. It was only several years hence, then, that the advantages of a university-type organization became widely accepted.

Any restructuring of French higher education that attempted to move in this direction would necessarily allocate more power and autonomy to the professoriate. Such a course would hardly be politically feasible unless the professors as a whole met certain minimal requirements of loyalty and reliability for the administration and the regime. Exactly what the mentality of the profession was at this juncture is far less obvious than critics generally assume it to be. Paul Gerbod has described the teaching corps of the lycées around 1880 as being suspended "between the bourgeoisie and the People ... their isolation in the nation all the more profound for it."[2] This description would also seem to apply to the members of the Letters and Sciences Faculties who were part of the same system of personnel. As an elite that defined itself by its intellectual attainments they had little in common with the commerical bourgeoisie.[3]

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[1] SES, II, lxxxiii-xcv.

[2] Gerbod, 642.

[3] Richard Seabold, Normalien Alumni in the Facultés and Lycées of France, (Ph.D. Diss., UCLA, 1970), 72-84.

Their relationship with the "People", on the other hand, was entirely theoretical. They possessed a faith that they were administering a meritocracy of intelligence, open to all regardless of social origins. This faith that they were the honest gatekeepers to the world of culture constituted one of the basic values of the professoriate. But, paradoxically, this value tended to reinforce the marked cleavages of social class in French education by producing resistance to any reforms which might lessen the severity of the programs, and thereby dilute the intellectual quality of the elite that they were forming.

Another basic value of the professors was a sense of patriotism no less ardent than that of their Mandarin counterparts across the Rhine.[1] During the course of the 1870s this seems to have become alloyed with a commitment to the Third Republic. Traditionally the French professor was supposed to be apolitical. This stance was strongly encouraged by the Second Empire, which distrusted the teaching corps; but it was an equally sound strategy during the political vicissitudes of the 1870s, when there were numerous firings for ideological reasons. The Republicans, once in power, did not immediately change these practices. Ollé-Laprune was dismissed from the Ecole Normale (1880) for a year after protesting in a Catholic cause, and at least until the end of the century partisan political activity by professors was officially frowned upon.[2] The fact that the professoriate did as a whole rally to the Republic,

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[1] Cf. Fritz Ringer, The Decline of the German Mandarins: the German Academic Community, 1890-1933, (Cambridge: 1969).

[2] Gerbod, 612. E.g. during the Dreyfus Affair the Rector of Bordeaux informed the Minister that he considered Emile Durkheim's Dreyfusard activities to be bad in principle: Archives Nationales, F17 25768.

then, was due to the logic of their situation, rather than attributable to the ideology of any of the party groupings in the Chamber of Deputies. It would have been difficult for these patriotic servants of the state not to have supported the Republican regime after it wholeheartedly committed itself to strengthening higher education and enhancing the status of their profession. Also, the opponents of the Republic were proponents of the Catholic or free system of higher education that was legalized in 1875, and which was a potentially harmful competitor of the state Faculties.

A study which has ascertained the political sympathies of a sample of Ecole Normale Supérieure graduates found that 19 of every 20 Parisian professors and administrators were identifiably republican after 1880.[1] However, they also truned out to be decidedly conservative republicans (Centre-Gauche). What is true for this aging sample (all entered the Ecole Normale before 1870) should not be accepted for the professoriate as a whole. The next generation, who experienced the anticlerical battles of the Republic during their formative years, would be much more likely to fall within the Republican center (gauche républicaine or Union républicaine) supporting Ferry or Gambetta. By the 1890s a significant number of Radicals were probably entering the ranks of the Faculties, but socialists would have been rare before the turn of the century. If the political spectrum of the faculty as a whole shifted leftward, the dominant tone was still set by the Republican center.[2] And, in social matters that tone

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[1] Seabold, 105-16.

[2] This was partly due to the large cohort of this generation recruited to enlarge the Faculties during the 1880s. Cf. Victor Karady, "L'Expansion universitaire et l'évolution des inégalités devant la carrière d'enseignant au début de la IIIe République", Revue française de sociologie, XIV (1973), 443-70.

was unequivocably conservative, as might be expected of a profession which defined their function in terms of an intellectual elite.

An individual professor at the beginning of the Third Republic had little voice in matters that affected his professional life. His immediate superior, the dean of his Faculty, would be one of his colleagues, but one who was chosen by the Minister. Above the dean was the considerable authority of the rector of the Academy, who was, once again, a nominee of the government. Rectors presided over the educational administration of each regional Academy in much the same way that the prefects served as the agent of the government in each Department. The rector's authority over each Faculty was quite direct. Should need arise, he could preside directly over any meeting of the Faculty, and he regularly conducted the sessions of the Conseil Académique of his jurisdiction. There, a variety of matters concerning education might be considered by the deans, the inspecteurs d'Académie, and representatives from the local area chosen by the Minister. Professors, however, were forbidden by law from being members of this Conseil until 1880. The Minister had his own independent means of scrutinizing the Facultés: the "Inspectors-General" were justified as "the eye of the government in the schools, always watching their condition, their success and their failure."[1] Before the reforms these inspectors formed a private council that informed the Minister of conditions in the educational system. In summary, it can be seen that the Minister's powers went unchallenged in the administration of the Académies: all positions of power were filled with government appointees who were quite directly under his authority. Only at the

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[1] SES I, 31n.

national level was there a quasi-autonomous institution to influence educational policy.

The Conseil Supérieur de l'Instruction Publique before 1870 was theoretically supposed to provide supervision by the nation over the educational system. It was basically an advisory body, but its advice seems to have been virtually binding in such matters as educational programs and degree requirements. Under the Second Empire Antoine Prost regards it as "purely decorative," no doubt because of the strength of other governmental controls.[1] When it was reconstituted in 1873 it was based upon essentially these same principles; only now, with major reforms looming ahead, its potential importance was greatly enhanced. Its make-up therefore became significant, a fact that could hardly encourage the hopes of reformers. At least one third of the Conseil came from sources likely to be unsympathetic to public education--Catholic bishops and educators, nominees of business and agriculture, etc. Over half were chosen, in one way or another, by the government; and only five of the 40 were elected from higher education. The Conseil, thus constituted, was a shackle on the educational system. Jules Ferry's perception of this situation indicates the resentment it provoked:

> Under pretext of social influences and the representation of moral interests, the majority of this Council was given to elements foreign to education. ...The state could not create a Faculty, open a lycée, found a collège without the permission of the Conseil supérieur; it was no longer master of its choice of books nor of the discipline of its professors. In a word, the Université was placed under surveillance by the police of its rivals, of its detractors and of its enemies.[2]

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[1] Prost, 31.

[2] Beauchamp, III, 327.

In a sense, the real importance of the Conseil Supérieur was negative: it was a potential hindrance to the autonomous administration of the educational system. Since its essential function was that of an overseer, it could not offer the kind of experience and technical knowledge necessary for the efficient conduct of the educational bureaucracy. However, there was clearly a need for just this kind of expertise. For that reason an institution was created which closely resembled the Conseil on the surface, but which served a quite different purpose.

In 1873 Jules Simon created the Comité Consultatif de l'Enseignement Publique as an advisory body to the Minister. The predecessor of this body has been the meeting of the Inspectors-General, but now these officials were to be joined by the Directors of the three branches of education and other ex-officio members like the Vice-Rector of the Academy of Paris. More indicative of its true nature, however, is the fact that the Minister could summon a variety of other functionnaires with specialized expertise to their deliberations. The Comité as a whole was less important than its three Sections, for higher, secondary and primary education. Whereas the Comité met only three times a year, the Sections convened monthly, and somewhat later this became weekly. After 1877 this specialization was carried further when the Section de l'enseignement supérieur established five commission (corresponding to the four types of Faculties, plus one on scholarly and disciplinary matters). Essentially, the Comité could consider anything referred to it by the Minister, and probably most of his actions received the committee's scrutiny. It did, however, have a special responsibility for routine matters of personnel evaluation and advancement. The Comité, or its equivalent, is undoubtedly a necessity

for a centralized bureaucracy. If information is to be funneled to the center, some institution must have the capacity to process it so that rational decisions can be made. As the French system of education expanded from the 1870s on, its very complexity removed it from the direct supervision of the impermanent Minister of Public Instruction. Control, then, came to be increasingly invested in the Comité and its most highly placed members, the Directors of the three branches of education.

From the end of the Second Empire until the twentieth century France had only three Directors of Higher Education: Armand du Mesnil (1870-79), Albert Dumont (1879-84) and Louis Liard (1884-1902). By way of contrast, during the same period the average tenure of a Minister of Public Instruction was less than a year. This difference in itself suggests that the Directors were primarily responsible for the stability of the system and the continuity of policy. The official powers of the Director do not seem to have been great. His authority was rather due to his leadership of the higher education section of the Comité Consultatif, and his supervision of the everyday business of the Faculties. Because of this arrangement the transitory Ministers had to depend upon their Directors for most of their knowledge. So, over the tenures of these three Directors of higher education, the important of their office increased. Du Mesnil, who first assumed his position under Duruy, was a proponent of basic reform during a period when they were not yet politically feasible. Albert Dumont, a former classics scholar, wholeheartedly championed the ideals of the reform movement, although it is difficult to distinguish his role in the actual reforms from the leadership of the Minister, Jules

Ferry. Dumont's handpicked successor was Louis Liard, who attempted to sustain the momentum of reform through less propitious times, and who eventually succeeded in establishing universities in France.

At the summit of the educational bureaucracy was the Minister of Public Instruction. As a member of the cabinet and possessor of a seat in either the Chamber of Deputies or the Sénat, he was a product of the political process, although quite often from an educational background. Given his extensive powers of appointment, the educational system as a whole should have been quite responsive to his will. In actuality, however, a number of factors prevented him from dominating the educational system under normal conditions. It has already been seen that the Ministers' tenures were invariably short, and that they were dependent upon the close cooperation of the educational administration. In addition, after the Republic was secure the men selected as Minister were genuinely concerned with educational development, and both they and the Chamber showed considerable respect for the integrity of the system. So, rather than being an autocratic "Grand-Master" of education as his position within the Napoleonic structure would seem to require, the Minister of Public Instruction was more of a mediator between the realms of politics and administration. If part of his function was to temper projected educational legislation with considerations of political feasibility, another part was to defend the educational system against hostile interpellations, and to shepard its budget through the two Chambers. For it was in the Chamber of Deputies and the Sénat that higher education ultimately confronted the realm of politics.

François Goguel, writing at the end of the Third Republic, suggested

that attitudes toward public primary education "could serve as a touchstone between the left and the right."[1] Higher education was never quite so volatile an issue as primary education, but the same general relationship would hold. Higher education was generally supported by the "left" which stood for a secular, republican state. Albert Dumont acknowledged this relationship when he wrote that the more liberal the Chambers, "the more they were supporters of great sacrifices for higher education."[2] This seems, quite literally, to have been the case. The rejuvination of French universities required a substantial financial commitment on the part of the legislature. This step was taken by the overwhelmingly Republican Chamber of Deputies of 1881-85, which increased Faculty budgets by approximately one-third. The budget was the primary means by which Deputies or Senators could influence higher education. In 1885, for example, the Paris Faculty of Catholic Theology was suppressed when the Chamber refused to approve its funds. A far more common practice consisted of Deputies offering amendments to the budget in order to pressure the Ministry. Although they usually failed to pass, and were often withdrawn, these probes gave the Ministry interests to consider in planning the next years budget.

The Chamber of Deputies could also affect higher education through direct legislation. This means of interference, however, was largely prevented by a conscious policy on the part of the Directors. Their goal was to make higher education autonomous, and hence as removed from the

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[1] François Goguel, La politique des partis sous la Troisième République, (Paris: 1958), 53.

[2] Revue internationale de l'enseignement, RIE, VIII (1884), 221.

political process as possible. But in addition, there existed a fear that public opinion, in the nation and in the two Chambers, was not sufficiently informed about the nature and needs of higher education.[1] Consequently, the Directors endeavored to introduce reforms, insofar as it was possible, through administrative decrees (emanating from the Minister). As a result, many of the major reforms never passed through the Chamber of Deputies. However, the fact that the republican majority in the Chamber tolerated this degree of autonomy for higher education should not obscure that in a larger sense the fate of the Faculties did depend upon the political climate. This was particularly evident during the 1870s when the future of higher education depended upon the nature of the regime that would succeed the Second Empire.

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[1] Ernest Lavisse, RIE, XII (1886), 20-27.

Part III

The trauma of defeat and national humiliation in the Franco-Prussian War affected the issue of educational reform in France in two distinct ways. The impetus for reform was enormously strengthened as the formerly benign competition with German universities was now perceived to be integrally linked with national survival.[1] On the other hand, the political strife and uncertainty which followed the war made it impossible to pursue a coherent policy. Conservatives and Catholics supported efforts that would break the state's monopoly of higher education.[2] A republican deputy introduced legislation that would have abruptly replaced the existing Faculties with several self-governing universities.[3] No plan could be enacted, however, until 1875, when the Catholic-dominated government of "moral order" succeeded in establishing liberty of higher education (Loi de 12 juillet 1875). Although the immediate beneficiary of this measure was the Church, it was widely believed that this form of competition could only benefit the state Faculties--provided, of course, that essential reforms were undertaken. Accordingly, this legislation carried the obligation that "within one year the government will present a projected law with the object of introducing the ameliorations recognized as necessary into the state of higher education" (art. 24).[4] The very wording of this stipulation indicates how general was the awareness of the deficiencies of

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[1] Claude Digeon, La Crise allemande de la pensée française (1870-1914), (Paris: 1959), esp. pp. 364-65.

[2] Liard, II, 310-33.

[3] Liard, II, 381-94.

[4] Article 24; also quoted in Liard, II, 337.

higher education. However, inasmuch as this legislation merely implemented the recommendations of the 1870 Commission, it also reveals how much time was lost by the political paralysis which followed the war. What the "ameliorations" in French higher education were to be, however, was still not clear. In the aftermath of the war the idea that France needed universities in order to regain her intellectual eminance gained wide currency. What a university would be within the French context was open to myriad interpretations. Thus, it was only after the government had committed itself in a definite manner to the reform of higher education that an informed and specific dialogue emerged on this subject. And, it was this which shortly gave rise to an actual reform movement.

The first actual manifestation of this development was an 1876 article on possible changes in French higher education by Emile Boutmy.[1] The author had already established himself as an academic innovator by founding through private contributions the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques (opened 1872) in order to raise the level of French statesmanship. His discussion of the promised renovation of the state system of higher education departed from previous pleas for reform by belittling the assumption that France's problems could be solved by transforming Faculties into universities. Such a move would be premature and ill-advised, according to Boutmy. The strength of the German Universities depended upon a number of conditions which could not be duplicated in France. Different systems of secondary education, different curriculums and different processes of examination and certification made the two systems

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[1] Emile Boutmy, "La Réforme de l'enseignement supérieur", Revue Bleu, (2 dec. 1886).

incompatible worlds whose institutions were by no means interchangable. In order to bring about the unification of knowledge that seemed so desirable the Faculties of Law and Medicine were quite irrelevant. The real objective should rather be to create the breadth of knowledge and intellectual intercourse of the German philosophical faculties within the French Faculties of Letters and Sciences.

Implicit in this critique of reformist thinking was the notion that higher education in each country formed a kind of organic whole. Careful study of how each system functioned was required before its operation could be significantly altered. For Boutmy, the ideal reform would have "small volume and great consequence," i.e. relatively slight structural changes would cause the system to function quite differently. What Boutmy had in mind for France was a new provision for the examinations which governed higher education. He would have candidates for baccalauréats, licences and professional degrees submit to two additional examinations covering specific courses offered in the Faculties. This would have the immediate benefit of populating the Faculties with students. It would also quickly tend to break the rigidity of the curriculum and its absolute servitude to the existing examinations.

Boutmy's analysis revealed a subtle understanding of the exigencies of higher education in France, and, perhaps for that reason, there was considerable merit in his proposal. But beyond this, his treatment presaged the dominant traits of the reform movement that he was to help organize. It replaced the commonplace adulation of the German University with a more critical stance; it pointed to the serious comparative study of higher education as a prelude and a means to reform; and it tacitly

accepted the existing framework of French higher education even while intending to drastically change the results.

At the time he produced this article Boutmy was meeting regularly with a small group of eminent, and similarly inclined Parisian academicians to discuss the coming reforms mandated by the legislation of 1875. They soon formed an "extra-administrative commission" to draft a comprehensive plan for French higher education.[1] The membership comprised Michel Bréal, Gabriel Monod and Ernest Renan--all of whom had made important contributions to the reform literature. Gaston Paris, to whom Boutmy gave credit for some of his ideas, was a member, as was Hypolite Taine and France's most renown chemist, Berthelot. The remaining participants consisted of a politically active medical professor (Liouville), the prefect of the Seine (Hérold) and the Director of Higher education, du Mesnil.

In their report they proposed establishing four-faculty universities in Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon, Montpellier, Nancy and perhaps Rennes. These universities would have civil personalities and would be completely self-governing. The Faculties would elect deans and delegates to a university council; the council, in turn, would elect a chancellor whose administration would be responsible to the state through the Rector of the Academy. To generate students for these universities and to attentuate the subservience of the curriculum to the examinations the commission endorsed Boutmy's basic idea: viz. requiring candidates to enroll in the Faculties and examining them on specific courses professed during a particular year.

The recommendations of the commission appear on the surface to be

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[1] Liard, II, 340-41; 494-503.

both reasonable and attractive. They would have had ramifications, however, that the commission did not wish to face. Most obvious was the fate of the Faculties that were not elevated to the status of universities. The logic of the plan implied that they would be either eliminated or derogated to a component of the secondary system. They also failed to consider the sensitive subject of the baccalauréat which was integrally linked with the functions of the Faculties under the existing system. Both these issues involved vested interests within the Université. Perhaps more significantly, they both involved political interests in the state--the first because it was a regional question, and the second because it was a cultural one. Perhaps these questions seemed rather minor to the Parisian academic elite who sat on the commission; or perhaps they were avoided out of circumspection, so as not to alienate possible support for their chief goal of creating French universities. In any case, these issues loomed as potential obstacles to reform even when the reform movement was being formed.

The 1877 commission became the nucleus of the actual reform movement the following year with the founding of the Société pour l'étude des questions d'enseignement supérieur. Thus, both the original positions of the commission and its general approach represent the initial consensus of the Société. As its name indicates, the avowed purpose of the Société was to acquire an understanding of higher education by studying it in various foreign countries. The tacit purpose, of course, was to demonstrate the possibility and the desirability of reforming the system in France. This goal was couched in terms of the positivistic assumptions typical of the period. "Higher education in France," they complained,

"is a litigation (procès) which has never been judged in France except by special pleading (plaidoiries): we want it to be judged on evidence (pièces)."[1] Members of the Société were commissioned to do studies of foreign universities, and these were supplemented by information from a network of correspondents. The monographs produced during the first year appeared in a volume called simply, Etudes de 1878. A volume of Etudes appeared each of the next two years, but with the inclusion of the proceedings of the Société, notices of legislation and other noteworthy information. This led in 1881 to the publication of the Revue internationale de l'enseignement, the official organ of the Société and probably the pre-eminent journal of higher education before the First World War.

The Société is conventionally regarded as a creation of the new generation of French academics that emerged with the secure establishment of the Republic.[2] This view, however, is somewhat misleading. The founding members of the Société represented the elite of French higher education, and were often in other respects decidedly conservative. Besides most of the members of the commission of 1877, they included Louis Pasteur, the philosopher Paul Janet and the historian Fustel de Coulanges. The initial capital for the Société was donated by wealthy benefactors. The younger generation was represented among the leadership of the Société by Ernest Lavisse and Edmund Dreyfus-Brissac. The former, a junior faculty member (maître de conférence) at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, became the general secretary of the Société and its foremost spokesman.

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[1] "Société pour l'étude des questions d'enseignement supérieur", Revue Bleu, (18 mai 1878).

[2] Cf. Prost, 223-24; and the impression drawn by Jean-Paul Mayeur, Les Débuts de la IIIe République, 1871-1898, (Paris: 1973), 149-50.

Dreyfus-Brissac (b. 1850) was one of the few non-academicians in the organization (trained as a lawyer, he had shortly before worked in the Ministry of Public Instruction); but he became assistant secretary and then editor of the Revue. The Société remained under their tutelage until nearly the end of the century.

In its early years the Société expanded remarkably without losing its elite character. Starting with about 300 adherants, it nearly doubled that figure in its first few years. The 1884 membership of approximately 650 may have been its largest. However, even before this figure had been reached Lavisse was able to boast that the majority of French academics were members.[1] If he meant faculty professors he was probably correct. Chair-holders accounted for about half of the membership, but comprised a heavy majority of the provincial adherants. The other half of the membership can be divided into three roughly equal groups: 1) what might be called junior faculty (maftres de conférences, chargés des cours and agrégés in law and medicine), plus a few lycée professors; 2) those not listed as having any academic affiliation; and, 3) those having more prestigious positions than chair-holders (deans, rectors or inspectors, plus some Deputies and members of the Institut).[2] The surprisingly large number in this last group, including even the Directors of higher education, should illustrate that the Société was a collective effort of both professors and administrators to renovate French higher education.

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[1] RIE, V (1883), 482.

[2] These figures are compiled from samples taken from the 1879 and the 1884 membership lists.

Actually, the goal of the Société during the early 1880s was to be universal by representing all of the personnel of higher education. They conceived of their groups as a kind of substitute for the integration and self-government which the isolated facultés lacked. If they fell short of this goal, it was partly because their very success in stimulating reform eventually undercut the basis of their appeal. After 1887 the Société stopped meeting for a decade, although the Revue continued to flourish.[1] However, to understand this development it is necessary to scrutinize more closely the aspirations of the Société.

At its inception the Société confronted three fundamental problems: to create true universities from the separate Faculties; to induce full-time students to study in the Letters and Sciences Faculties; and to revise the examinations so as to raise the level of teaching and scholarship. Although there was always diversity of opinion within the Société, a consensus can be readily discerned on these issues.[2]

Of paramount importance was the creation of universities. This, however, did not mean merely imitating the Germans. The studies carried out by the Société had made it evident that contemporary German universities fell far short of the idealized conception that hitherto had been commonly accepted in France. Rather, it was a matter of adapting the intrinsic merits of universities to the specific conditions of France. Self-government, for example, was particularly attractive in the late 1870s because higher

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[1] François Picavet, "La Société d'enseignement supérieur (1878-1903)", RIE, 45 (1903), 481-512.

[2] The following account draws on Ernest Lavisse, "L'Enseignement superieur en 1878", Etudes de 1878, 587-652; E. Dreyfus-Brissac, "Les reformes de l'enseignement superieur en France", RIE, I (1881) 121-36 and the reports of the section meetings of the Société in Etudes de 1879, Etudes de 1880, and thereafter in the RIE.

education was emerging from a prolonged period of political intimidation by basically hostile governments. Even though this ceased to be a problem under the benevolent Republican governments, autonomy was still sought in order to raise the overall level of French scholarship. Strong provincial universities, it was hypothesized, would develop their own areas of strength, and thereby counter-balance the intellectual domination of Paris.[1] An integral part of the conception of a university was that it would be universal in its coverage, meaning in this context that it would include all four faculties--Law, Medicine, Letters and Science (universality did not include theology or pharmacy). This notion was virtually an article of faith in the Société, despite the sensible arguments of dissenters like Boutmy, mentioned above. In fact, examples of the interdependence of all knowledge were continually invoked to fortify this point. As a consequence, the only provincial centers eligible for this exalted status were Bordeaux, Lyon and Nancy--and with some adjustments perhaps Aix-Marseille and Douai-Lille. The remaining nine Académies lacked medical faculties, and two of these did not possess law. The fate of these Facultés was a political problem bearing on regional interests. It also caused misgivings among professors of the "petit-faculties" who faced possible obsolescence. Although few went so far as to advocate the suppression of these Facultés, the logic of the Société's position required that the limited resources be concentrated in the proposed universities.

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[1] France's strongest provincial Faculties, those in Strasbourg, were lost when Germany annexed Alsace in 1871. However, it was chimerical to expect provincial Faculties to rival Paris as long as there was a single, centralized system of personnel, in which Paris constituted the highest rank.

If the question of universities always loomed in the background, the most immediate problem for the science and letters faculties was to find students. The most evident solution to this was first to require candidates for the licence and agrégation to actually follow a course of study in the Faculties, and secondly to require all secondary teachers to attain at least a licence (as was done in Germany, it was often pointed out). Although this course was not without practical difficulties, the government was well-disposed to move in this direction. Some were concerned, however, that this course would turn the Faculties into the normal schools envisioned by Duruy; that it would limit them to transmitting the rigid and stale secondary curriculum to future teachers. What would then become of the Lehrfreiheit and Lernfreiheit supposedly required for the advancement of scholarship? Fustel de Coulanges expressed an extreme position when he wrote:

> The Faculties of Letters exist in order to advance learning, and not for any other thing. Unless they are reduced to being purely examining bodies, they must be schools of higher learning (hautes études), schools of historical and philological science.[1]

Yet, he was also expressing the real heart of the reform tradition as it had existed since the 1860s. The only way to reconcile these two desiderata—modern scholarship and students to whom it could be taught—was to revise the examination structure. Consequently, this is where the energies of the Société were very soon directed.

There was at this time a single licence-ès-lettres for all subjects. Its examination required essays in Latin and French, the composition of

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[1] Etudes de 1879, 331.

Latin verse and an exercise in Greek. To this written work was added oral questioning on selected French, Latin and Greek authors. The problem was perceived as one of preserving the common licence which symbolized the culture générale of the lycées, while at the same time allowing specialization in a particular subject. For this reason there was considerable opposition to establishing several different licences, as had already been done in science. The Paris letters section of the Société resolved this problem by endorsing a compromise of sorts. They recommended having one common exam coupled with a specialized exam in letters, philosophy, history or modern languages. Then, if special classes were offered in these subjects, and if they were restricted to registered students, matriculation in a Faculty would become a virtual necessity for passing the examination. Even this moderate proposal was disquieting to some of the petit-faculties—a fact that reveals the actual decrepitude of literary education in the provinces. Their few students, they argued, had a difficult time passing the existing licence examination; if it were made more demanding these Faculties would be likely to lose those students they still possessed. These protestations notwithstanding, the Parisian proposal was adopted by the Ministry, and shortly afterward, as will be seen, it was put into operation. Although it was clearly an improvement over the existing situation, it did nothing to alter the fundamental connection between the licence and the secondary school curriculum.

Consideration of the reform of higher education in France inevitably involved the system of secondary education, and in fact, the deliberations within the Société about the licence were immediately followed by discussions about the baccalauréat. This was not only because the Faculties

were responsible for training teachers, but because the association of the Letters and Sciences Faculties with the baccalauréat was one of the fundamental structural features of the French system. These Facultés were originally created primarily to provide examining juries for the baccalauréat; and even in the 1870s this can be seen as the most important activity justifying the existence of the non-Parisian Faculties. This task took a full two months out of a professor's year--something the proponents of more research were quick to point out. Part of the rationale for this was that the baccalauréat was regarded as the first degree of higher education. Société members were in accord that this was a pernicious distinction. It meant that secondary school graduates had no further need of higher education, and could therefore embark directly upon professional studies. They recommended instead that the secondary school teachers themselves examine their students at the end of their studies, and confer a simple diploma. In the battle then raging over secondary curriculum between the classics and the moderns the Société leaned decidedly toward the moderns. Without ever repudiating the value of a classical education, they generally felt that requirements like Latin discourse were unjustifiable and ultimately fruitless.

In questions such as these, however, the Société had little hope of making its views prevail. For if secondary and higher education were closely linked, it was a tacit but ubiquitous reality of the French system that secondary took precedence over higher. In the actual operation of the system this mean that the Faculties of Letters and of Sciences were tailored to meet the needs of secondary education, but that secondary education could not be altered to fit the needs of the Faculties. This

was partly due to the fact that secondary education had other interested constituencies. Not only were there numerous bacheliers in publishing or government who regarded themselves as guardians of culture générale, but the faculty of the lycées and the collèges soon became a force to be reckoned with. In response to the reform agitation around 1880, and undoubtedly mindful of the incipient success of the Société, some lycée and collège professors founded the Société pour l'étude des questions de l'enseignement secondaire. Unlike their counterpart in higher education, this group soon revealed themselves to be both parochial and self-serving. As a pressure group for the interests of the secondary school professoriate they were particularly dedicated to defending the classical curriculum.

The problems of dependence on the secondary system, as this example would indicate, became more intractable as the interests of higher education and secondary education diverged. Part of this phenomenon appears to have been the differentiation of what had formerly been a unitary system of personnel.[1] The creation of junior positions in the Faculties provided a distinct track for those who pursued careers in higher education for which the customary lycée apprenticeship was superfluous. This divergence of the two systems served to make the dilemma which faced the reformers more acute. Their original position had been that the connection between higher and secondary education should be severed. However, their desire to find students for the deserted Faculties had led them to tailor their curriculum to the needs of secondary school teachers—their only visible constituency. The approach taken by the reformers

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[1] Seabold provides a useful account of the recognized ranks of this unitary system (36-58). More research is needed to determine precisely how this differentiation occurred.

had much to do with bringing them to this impasse. They wished, above all, to be moderate and realistic--to offer reforms which would be practical and palatable. The strength of this approach was that they achieved consensus on a program which was to a large extent acceptable to the government and eventually enacted into law. The weakness was that their piecemeal program, while undoubtedly moving in the right direction, either did not go far enough or had undesirable repercussions. To fully evaluate this it is now necessary to turn from the theory of reform to its practice.

Reform of French Higher Education: Part IV

Early in 1879 Senate elections for the first time produced a republican majority in that chamber. This, like the previous republican victory in elections for the Chamber of Deputies, was a clear repudiation of the monarchist President, MacMahon. With his policy and his conception of the Presidency henceforth untenable, MacMahon soon resigned and was replaced by a republican, Jules Grévy. Thus, after almost a decade of political uncertainty, France was firmly under the control of republicans. Virtually the first task that they set for themselves was the transformation of the educational system into an extension of the republican state. Their political resolve was strengthened by a vindictive anti-clericalism which fully reflected the Church's partisanship in the preceding political battles. Given the political dimensions of this issue, it is understandable that the most important effort was to create a public system of primary education to supplant that offered by the religious orders. However, the administrative changes and financial commitments required for this effort were, in a sense, prerequisites to the reform of higher education.

During the next six years Jules Ferry was Minister of Public Instruction for five and head of the government for three of those years. He added an uncharacteristic continuity of leadership to the resolve of the republican majority for educational reform. Ferry himself viewed the contemporary conflict of ideas in essentially positivistic terms.[1]

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[1] "Higher education is the powerful trunk whose sap nourishes primary and secondary education; ... where is science created and developed, where are the new techniques born? In higher education and in all the institutions attached to it..." Discours de Jules Ferry to the Congrès des sociétés savantes (31 mars 1883), in IRE V (1883), 425-30.

He thus regarded the "science and reason" that would be taught in the state schools as a future barrier against the retrograde ideologies of the right. This view also implied support for higher education as one of the sources of "positive" knowledge. So, even though primary education was the most conspicuous issue during this period, the governments of this period were also concerned to rehabilitate higher education. But first, Ferry had to expell clerical influences from the existing educational structure.

When the term of the 1873 Conseil Supérieur expired in 1879, Ferry did not appoint a replacement. Instead, he proposed legislation that would reconstitute the Conseil by admitting to it only representatives of education.[1] The previous Conseil, as well as the predecessor during the Second Empire, had been intended to provide surveillance of the educational system by society. However, this rationale was now rejected both in theory and in practice. Ferry stressed that under a democratic regime it is the state, rather than any particular institution, that represents society; and, it was further noted by the commissions that studied this legislation, the previous Conseils had largely obstructed efforts to attain needed reforms.[2] The new Conseil, Ferry proposed, was to be based on the principle of competence, which meant direct experience with the educational system. The seats were distributed so that every significant segment of public instruction was represented. Furthermore, all of these representatives (46 of 59) were to be elected by their peers.

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[1] Beauchamp, III, 322-75.

[2] Ibid., 327, 352.

The new Conseil established by the law of 27 février 1880, then, provided a large measure of internal governance to the educational system. Higher education, including the Institut, elected 24 members, technical education 5, secondary education 10, and 6 members were elected by the administration of the primary system. The Minister appointed four members from "enseignement libre," but not all of them were from Catholic institutions. The educational administration was represented by 9 members chosen from among the inspectors-general, rectors and other high officials. In fact, the holders of certain offices were always in this group, and thus virtually ex-officio members. They included the directors of the three branches of Public Instruction, the Vice-Rector of the Academy of Paris and the Director of the Ecole Normale Supérieure. In spite of the number of created members, the Ministry retained a preponderant influence through the "Permanant Section" of the Conseil. Since the Conseil itself was huge and geographically dispersed, it met only twice a year. Its business was first considered and organized by the Permanant Section based entirely in Paris. Its fifteen members consisted of the 9 selections of the Minister, plus 6 of the elected members, also of the Minister's choosing. This meant that the Parisian educational elite which was predominant within the full Conseil would also control routine matters in the Permanant Section. Furthermore, virtually the same group sat on the Comité Consultatif. This was so apparent at the time that the Comité was revised to allow greater specialization immediately after the new Conseil was legislated.[1] Thus, with the establishment of the

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[1] Ibid., 462-64.

new Conseil in 1880, it can be said that the control of Public Instruction passed to an internal oligarchy.

The new system, it was clear, was a considerable improvement over the old. No longer could groups basically hostile to the growth and development of state education impede its progress; nor could partisan political interests readily penetrate the educational system. But, if the new arrangements finally banished the influence of traditional conservatism from education, the rule of an internal oligarchy carried the danger of entrenching an institutional conservatism in its place. This could hardly be perceived, however, in the early 1880s. Both primary and higher education were embarking upon radical renovations; and, some of the most forceful proponents of reform filled the positions of power. However, in secondary education an excessive reverance for existing traditions soon became an obstacle to reform. The modernization of the curriculum that was accomplished in 1880, for example, was largely vitiated by subsequent adjustments in 1884 and 1890.[1] This may be regarded as a portend that the construction of a modern educational system was not a unilinear development. Nevertheless, the restructuring of the Conseil Supérieur solved one of the immediate problems facing French education, and also brought Public Instruction into harmony with the Republic. This very harmony made it unlikely, so long as the Republic was secure, that education would receive another major stimulus for reform from the political realm. At the same time, the control of Public Instruction by an internal oligarchy, who were both the products

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[1] Prost, 249-52; Clement Falcucci, L'Humanisme dans l'enseignement secondaire en France au XIXe siècle, (Paris: 1939), 303-436, esp. 411.

of the system and its beneficiaries, cast some doubt upon the system's future capability to adapt to changing social and intellectual conditions.

Perhaps the most obvious prerequisite for upgrading French higher education was to increse its financial support. During the Second Empire the Faculties had been almost self-supporting through student fees, but this was obviously an inadequate base.[1] The first major step in this effort was made late in 1875, when commitments were made to augment the 1877 Faculties' budgets by more than 50% (see Figure The bulk of these new funds were used to regularize faculty salaries (by dropping the professor's examination fee), and creating 11 new chairs in Letters and 13 in Sciences.[2] Further significant increases followed shortly during the Ferry years, however, the sums involved in this instance represent only a small component of the financial commitment made to education by the republican majority of the Chamber of Deputies. From 1880 to 1883 the total budget of Public Instruction more than doubled, and its share of the national budget rose from 2% to 4 1/2%. The bulk of this expenditure was required to fashion the public system

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[1] The Faculties had no control over these fees, which passed directly into the national treasury, but an effort was made to prevent the cost of the Faculties from greatly exceeding the income they brought. For example, Theodore Zeldin notes that the Nancy Faculty of Law was established in 1864 with the proviso that the town would compensate the state for any net expenditures it required ("Higher Education in France, 1848-1940", Journal of Contemporary History, VI (1967), 55). The studentless Letters Faculties were prevented from being a financial burden under this system by forcing the law students to inscribe in their courses. This created a paying clientele who clearly never attended any of the courses.

[2] SES II, 899-934.

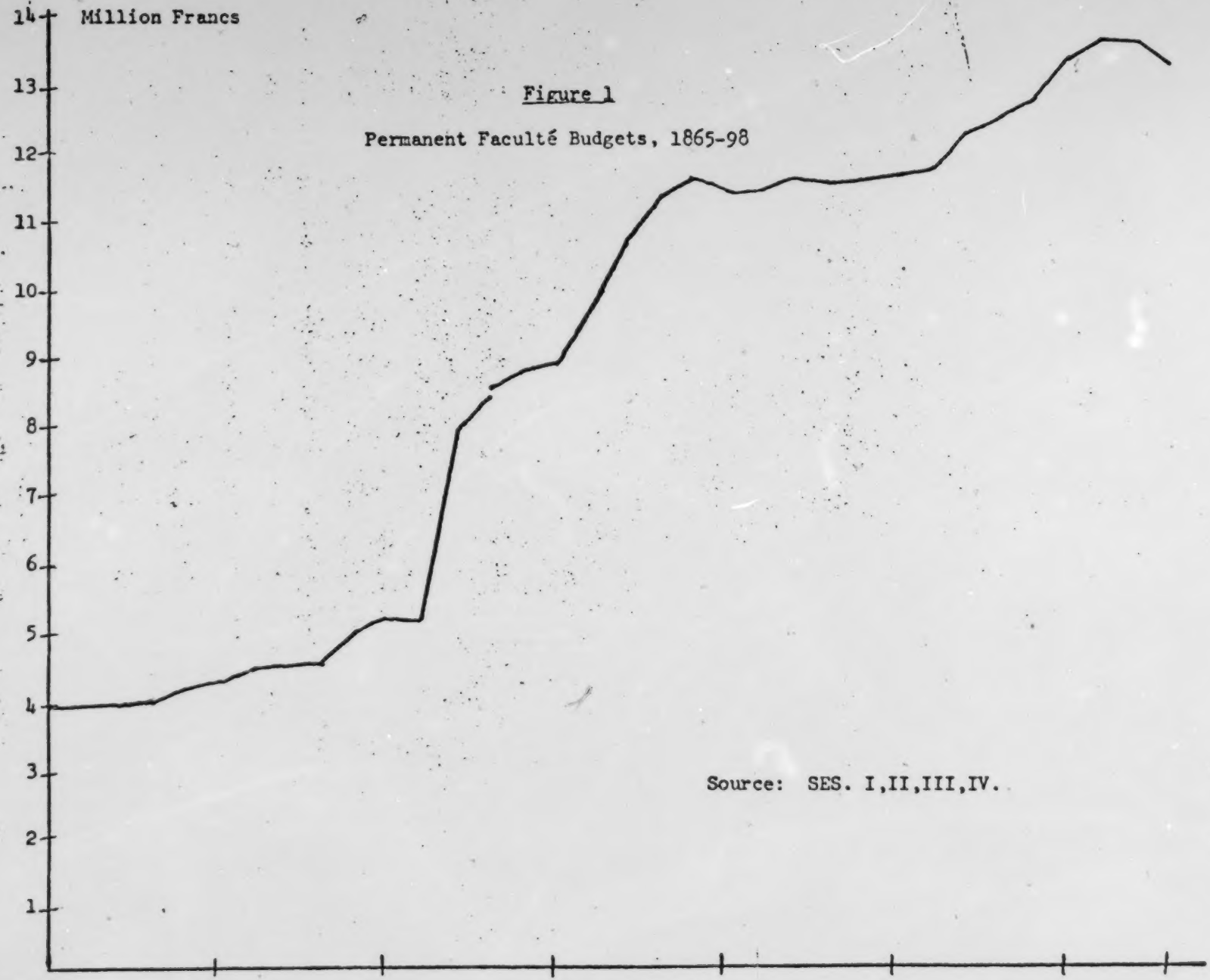

Figure 1

Permanent Faculté Budgets, 1865-98

Source: SES. I,II,III,IV.

44 a
Figure 1

of primary education, but the few million francs that could be diverted to higher education were desperately needed--for student scholarships, libraries and new teaching positions. In addition, almost all the Faculties were in need of new facilities. The various municipalities took much of the initiative in financing this construction, but the national government assisted in this effort, particularly after 1880.[1] These sums may not appear impressive in the light of twentieth century investments in higher education, or even in comparison with contemporary efforts in Germany and the U.S.; but in their defense, it should be emphasized that this was an investment in the future. The resources devoted to Letters and Sciences, in particular, were made in the expectation that students would shortly be found to justify the development of those Faculties.

The first measures toward this end had already been taken in 1877 when 300 scholarships were created to support students while they prepared for their licence in the Faculties of Letters and Sciences. Even though licenciés were badly needed in the secondary schools, the primary intention of this measure was to strengthen higher education. The scholarship students, it was hoped, "would form the kernal of a serious audience" in the Faculties.[2] To accomplish this, it was required that the majority be allocated to the provincial Faculties. And more importantly, accompanying legislation created special classes and teachers

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[1] According to the figures given by Albert Dumont, Municipal Councils paid 67% of construction costs of 40.5 million francs during the period from 1868-78; during the next five years (1879-83) they supplied 55% of construction costs of 41.8 million francs for the Faculties: "Notes sur l'enseignement supérieur en France", RIE, VIII (1884), 223. Louis Liard provides figures that show the municipalities providing 48% of 94.5 million francs in Faculty construction costs from 1870 to 1892 (p. 371n).

[2] Beauchamp, III, 166-71. Some of these scholarships could be used in Medicine or Pharmacy, but most were intended for Sciences and Letters.

for this new, serious audience. These were maîtres de conférences, a kind of junior faculty usually still preparing their doctorats, who would offer conférences reserved solely for inscribed students. They were specifically intended to be a functional equivalent to the privat docenten in the German universities, although as civil servants performing a valued service they were both appointed and paid by the Ministry of Public Instruction.

The establishment of these scholarships was judged by all concerned to be an unequivocal success. Consequently, Jules Ferry chose to extend the program with an additional hundred scholarships for the agrégation. Another factor considered here was the great demand for agrégés which could no longer be filled by the Ecole Normale Supérieure alone.[1] Subsequent legislation raised the total number of scholarships to 550 by 1883. This was still a rather limited clientele to be divided between the 30 Faculties of Letters and Sciences. In order to expand this student population to a respectable size it was necessary to attract two other types of students: the secondary school teachers who had not attained their licences, and, to the extent that they existed, those desiring a liberal education, but not a teaching career.[2]

The Ministry of Public Instruction was in no position to require all teachers in the collèges communaux to possess a licence, or all the lycée teachers to become agrégés, because there were simply not enough qualified personnel available. Instead, bacheliers were hired as

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[1] Ibid., 473-74n.

[2] Cf. "Circulaire relative aux conférences..." (8 sept. 1879), ibid., 278-82.

maîtres répétiteurs, but were required to pursue studies in the Faculties toward their licences.[1] This could take three different forms. If they taught in the same location as the Faculty, they would attend regular conférences.[2] Those farther away, but still within commuting distance, were expected to attend special lessons provided for their benefit on Thursdays. In addition, a regular procedure was established for preparation through correspondence lessons. The Ministry applied considerable pressure on the secondary school teachers to pursue advanced degrees. Every year at the beginning of October a sheet was circulated in every lycée and collège on which each teacher had to indicate the exams for which he was preparing. Young teachers who indicate they are not working toward a degree, the Minister's instructions read, "would be declaring... that they regard their careers as definitely limited."[3]

While the Ministry of Public Instruction could manipulate the boursiers and maîtres on its payroll, it had much less ability to attract students who sought a humanistic education without specific career goals. It has already been noted that the Law Faculties offered the closest French equivalent to a disinterested liberal education. An inquiry by Duruy in 1867 uncovered 1000 law students who were simply "complementing"

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[1] Arrêté (29 mai 1880), ibid., 472-73. Maîtres d'études had similar obligations, but their greater teaching burdens were taken into account (ibid., 280). By 1887 they were designated maîtres répétiteurs (8 jan, 1887): ibid., IV, 292-96.

[2] A ministerial circular threatened to remove maîtres répétiteurs from these highly desirable locations if they did not follow Faculty courses regularly and assiduously (2 fev. 1885): ibid., 62.

[3] Ibid., III 280. This pressure naturally made more enroll than intended to seriously work toward degrees; thus tending to inflate the enrollment figures: see Ferdinand Lot, "Essais de statistique des étudiants des universités françaises", Revue politique et parlementaire, (10 oct. 1897), 160-80.

their education. Nearly twice that number envisaged careers in some form of governmental service.[1] Certainly a portion of these students might be induced to pursue their studies in the Faculties of Letters? This, in fact, could only occur if some compelling courses were offered, and if the licence were reformed to reflect the material learned in those courses. The old licence which tested candidates only on Greek, Roman and French language and literature was an ordeal to which no one but future teachers would submit. It completely omitted those subjects-especially history--most likely to have popular appeal. The Faculties of Letters themselves expressed the hope that specialization within the licence would bring them non-professional students. In addition, they argued that studies in history and philosophy ought to be considered sufficient for civil service and other careers.[2] So, the Faculties of Letters perceived the desirability, at least, of transcending the constrictive function of teacher preparation.

In summary, then, the measures taken to populate the Faculties of Sciences and Letters with serious students were an immediate, though limited, success. The scholarship students and maîtres répétiteurs were soon joined by independent students, raising enrollments in these Faculties from 670 to nearly 3700 in only a decade (1878-88).[3] The overall growth of higher education in France is a complex phenomenon governed largely by social factors beyond the control of the Ministry

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[1] See above, Part I. SES I, 7.

[2] "Résponses des Facultés et de Conseils académique sur les changements à apporter à l'examen de la licence ès lettres", SES III, 526-29.

[3] SES III. Another result was improvement in the competence of the secondary teaching corps: see Prost, 371.

of Public Instruction. For that reason this topic will be discussed in detail later in this paper. However, one prerequisite of this growth that the Ministry could influence was the elevation of the content of higher education. So this, quite naturally, became the next object of reform.

Some of the preliminary steps for bringing higher learning (hautes études) into French higher education had already been taken by the time Ferry assumed control. The establishment of conférences restricted to actual students was, of course, intended to create specialized, advanced instruction. Regular libraries for student use were also in the process of being organized.[1] The next obvious step was to connect advanced studies to the requirements for the licence ès lettres. There were two other practical reasons for revising the old, undifferentiated licence: first, as a consequence of the absence of history and philosophy on the exam, most of the teachers of those subjects had never been required to demonstrate their competence; and secondly, changes in the secondary curriculum, such as the elimination of Latin verse, had rendered parts of the licence obsolete.[2] These immediate problems were rectified in 1880 by creating specializations within the licence ès lettres for history, philosophy and letters (modern languages was added shortly thereafter).[3]

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[1] Libraries were supposed to have been established for each grouping of Faculties early in the Second Empire (Arrêté, 18 mars 1855), but, typically, funds were apparently never made available. A law of 29 déc. 1873 required all students to pay a library fee, but the libraries were not systematically organized until the directives of 4 mai 1878 and 23 août 1879.

[2] "Réponses des Facultés," op. cit.; and "Rapport fait au Conseil supérieur par P. Janet," Beauchamp, III, 529-32.

[3] Décret, 25 dec. 1880. Beauchamp, III, 525-34.

The examination was divided equally between the common section, reflecting the content of the former licence, and whichever specialty the candidate chose.

While this reform was a clear improvement upon the old licence, it left a fundamental problem unresolved. As a degree of higher learning the licence implied a measure of advanced study; but as a licentia docenti it implied mastery of the comprehensive secondary curriculum. In actuality, advanced study was severely inhibited by the assumed necessity to cover both the culture générale derived from the classics and the entire range of each specialty. A candidate in history, for example, who had to demonstrate a competence in ancient, medieval and modern history, plus geography, could hardly learn more than a superficial overview of these subjects. The agrégation, being a still more advanced examination that qualified teachers for the lycées, found these diverging purposes even more difficult to bridge. A reform in 1885 was specifically intended to inject more systematic preparation into the agrégations in both science and letters. However, the overriding concern to preserve the professional and pedagogical features of the exam allowed comparatively few changes.[1] As a result, the sheer magnitude of the material covered continued to preclude the kind of advanced training and specialized research the reform was meant to encourage.

It would seem, then, that in the 1880s the educational structure was not yet capable of accommodating both teacher education and the requirements of modern scholarship. Lavisse, for one, complained that the examinations ruled the system: that the conférences recently established to

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[1] See the reports of the examining commission in Beauchamp, IV, 122-29.

introduce advanced studies into the Faculties were now entitled "préparation à la licence", "préparation à l'agrégation."[1] A provincial professor lamented that the students were "too poorly prepared to occupy themselves with studies which do notfigure on their program."[2] Lehr- und Lernfreiheit could hardly exist under these conditions.[3] The difficulty of making scholarship an organic part of the system was demonstrated by the unconventional expedients adopted by the Ministry. Students were warned not to restrict their studies to only the lessons required for their exams.[4] Professors were exhorted to initiate their better students into the methods of modern scholarship, and to promote student collaboration in their research.[5] And, provision was made in 1883 to enrich the course offering by allowing qualified people to offer "cours libres" in the Faculties.[6] Such measures were, of course, adventitious to the system as a whole, and for that reason could be expected to have only marginal effects.

The initial attempts to introduce the standards and habits of

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[1] E. Lavisse, "La préparation aux agrégations", RIE, V (1883), 375.

[2] Albert Lebègue, "Les Facultés des lettres en province", RIE, VIII, (1184), 535-42.

[3] In fact, there were two formal provisions for Lernfreiheit in French literary education: students could take an optional, supplemental examination as part of the licence over one or two courses followed in the Faculty; and, in the Ecole Normale supérieure students devoted the first year to the licence and the third year to the agrégation, thus leaving the second year free for disinterested study (until the Diplôme d'Etudes supérieures was instituted).

[4] "The candidates in letters, in general, want only to attend the lessons which directly prepare for the examinations; this way of perceiving their own interest is narrow and dangerous." Beauchamp, III, 279.

[5] "Circulaire relative à l'enseignement dans les Facultés", RIE, V (1883), 330-32.

[6] Décret, 24 Juillet 1883: Beauchamp, III, 728-30.

scientific scholarship into French higher education met with limited success. A few anachronisms were removed, and the entire regimen was made slightly less inflexible. Perhaps more importantly, this small progress stimulated the morale and the energies of reformers, thus encouraging them to persist in their efforts to transform the academic culture of France. However, in the future they would again have to confront the obstacle that the initial reforms had failed to remove. This was the domination of higher education in science and letters by a degree structure tailored to the requirements of teacher training. This situation was somewhat justifiable during the Ferry period, when the few students in science and letters planned educational careers, and were badly needed there. It became more onerous when expanding enrollments made it obvious that these Faculties were attracting a new constituency.

The overriding objective of the reform movement remained the creation of true universities. The importance of this goal can be recognized as at least partly symbolic--to create an identifiable University of Paris to rank with Berlin, Oxford and Harvard. But, there were also tangible benefits that might be gained. The reform movement had stressed the advantages of educational pluralism. Its realization depended not only upon the creation of universities, but more directly upon granting them autonomy to develop their distinctive strengths, and the resources that this development required. These factors were ultimately of greater value than the unification of knowledge which figured so prominently in the rhetoric on this subject.

During the 1870s two separate projects for creating universities

sponsored by Paul Bert and Waddington both foundered.[1] Perhaps for that reason Ferry chose a cautious strategy when he raised the subject again. His first step was to solicit the opinions of the Faculties on the desirability of universities, how they might be organized, and what powers they might be given. Most likely, he hoped for an endorsement of universities which could then be utilized to overcome the remaining opposition. However, the response he actually received was somewhat equivocal.[2] An overwhelming majority of the Faculties endorsed the principle of universities, but there were significant differences within this consensus. In those locations where the Faculties of Law, Medicine, Science and Letters already existed there was support for a limited number of four-faculty universities; but in most of the other Académies support existed only for a plan that would accord university status to them as well. Furthermore, there was a widespread reluctance to compromise any of the existing rights of the individual Faculties. The Ministry consequently refrained both from antagonizing a substantial portion of its professoriate and from throwing this issue into the political arena. In 1885 it instituted a reorganization of the Faculties through ministerial decrees that embodied the elements of consensus revealed by the Enquête.[3] The Faculties received greater autonomy and responsibility, much as they had wished. They were granted the ability to receive and administer bequests and grants; Faculty Councils and

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[1] Liard, II, 481-94; 503-19.

[2] Enquêtes et documents relatifs à l'enseignement supérieur: Universites (vol. XVI), Pairs: 1885.

[3] Décret, 25 juillet 1885 and Décret 28 dec. 1885: Beauchamp, IV, 93-97, 203-22.

Faculty Assemblies were established for their self-government; and, they were virtually allowed to select their own deans. On the other hand, a "General Council of Faculties" was created for each Academy to bring them into active contact with each other. It was hoped that a university spirit of solidarity and cooperation would be engendered in these preliminary bodies. So, with the best of intentions the 1885 reforms moved in opposite directions--to foster unity and to strengthen particularism. And, there was little doubt which tendency was the stronger. Whereas the General Council had little to do besides routinely approve faculty decisions and haggle over the library budget, the Faculties had a firmer control of their own affairs than ever before.[1]

In 1890 the Minister of Public Instruction, Léon Bourgeois, felt that the time was ripe to consummate this protracted evolution. Accordingly, he proposed legislation that would have created universities in the seven cities that by this time had four Faculties, and would have left the status of the others unchanged.[2] The events which followed justify higher education's wariness of the political process. First within the examining Senate commission, and then upon the Senate floor, it was apparent that the Ministry could not have its way without substantial compromises.[3] In particular, it was feared that the new universities

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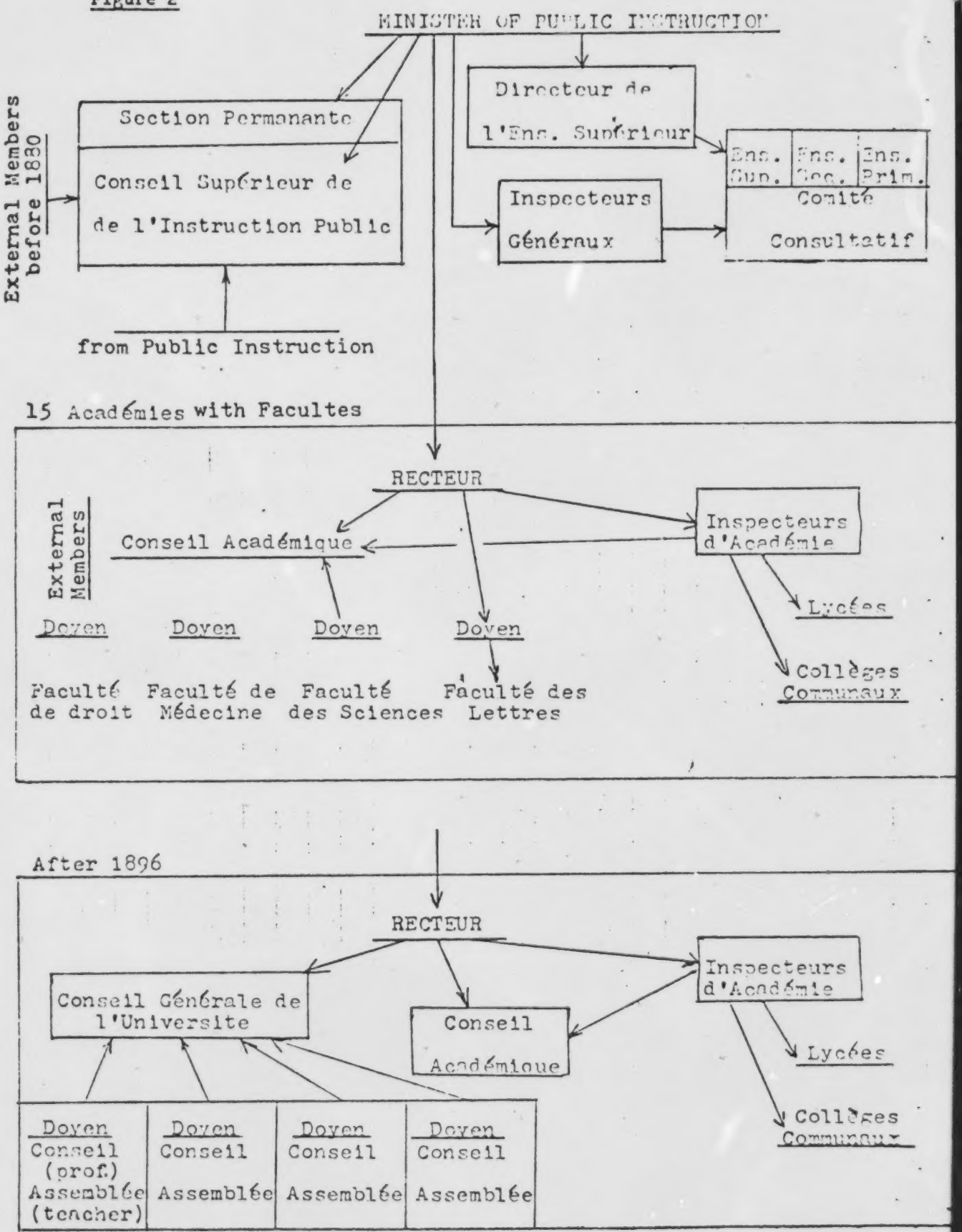
[1] A further step in this development occurred in 1889 when the Faculties were given their own budgets. Beauchamp, V, 9; 58-71.

[2] Louis Liard, Director of higher education since 1884, was an important force behind the drive to create universities. His Universités et Facultés (Paris: 1890) was intended to win public support for Bourgeois' proposal. He had also provided the most coherent account of the confusing events which followed: "La Fondation des Universités françaises", Revue des Deux Mondes (1 août 1902), 523-56.

[3] For the Senate debate, see Universités, op. cit.

Figure 2


MINISTER OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Section Permanante
Conseil Supérieur de
de l'Instruction Public
External Members
before 1830
from Public Instruction
Directeur de
l'Ens. Supérieur
Ens. Sup.
Ens. Sec.
Ens. Prim.
Comité
Consultatif
Inspecteurs
Généraux
15 Académies with Facultes
RECTEUR
External Members
Conseil Académique
Inspecteurs
d'Académie
Lycées
Collèges
Communaux
Doyen
Doyen
Doyen
Doyen
Faculté de droit
Faculté de Médecine
Faculté des Sciences
Faculté des Lettres
After 1896
RECTEUR
Inspecteurs
d'Académie
Conseil Générale de
l'Universite
Conseil
Académique
Lycées
Collèges
Communaux
Doyen
Conseil
(prof.)
Assemblée
(teacher)
Doyen
Conseil
Assemblée
Doyen
Conseil
Assemblée
Doyen
Conseil
Assemblée

would threaten or diminish the status of the remaining Faculties and special schools. Rather than accede to the bloc supporting these interests, the Ministry was happy to have the bill sent back to the commission (1892).

After raising so many hopes and resentments the issue could not remain buried for long. But, before it resurfaced the Ministry engineered another partial measure. A provision was attached to an 1893 finance bill creating "corps des facultés" as legal entities with the General Councils as their responsible agents. A corresponding reorganization of the General Council made it clear that these corps were to be universities in all but name.[1] Thus, when the problem of universities was raised two years later, its resolution was already at hand. Realizing its original proposal was irretrievable, and wishing to preclude a more objectionable bill prepared in the Senate, the Ministry (under Raymond Poincaré) introduced a simple measure in the Chamber of Deputies that would bestow the title of university upon the existing corps. In this form apparently devoid of controversy, the law was passed unanimously in the Chamber and overwhelmingly in the Senate.[2]

The University of Paris was thus reborn, even if it was slightly embarassed to share its nursery with the University of Clermont and its like. However, it is with good reason that Antoine Prost has called this delayed birth in actuality the death certificat for true universities in France.[3] The benefits of pluralism could hardly be claimed since the

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[1] Loi, 28 avril 1893; Décret, 9 août 1893: Beauchamp, V, 247; 304-09.

[2] Loi, 10 juillet 1896: Beauchamp, V, 591-604.

[3] Prost, 239.

system remained highly centralized--with the most important resources still controlled by the state, Moreover, with the existing dispersion of those resources there was no chance of any provincial center rivaling the predominance of Paris. The most important gains in the area of self-government had already been achieved, and these had accrued chiefly to the benefit of the Faculties. The new University Councils therefore represented neither the unification of knowledge nor the common spirit of the institution; rather, they were meeting grounds for the entrenched Faculty interests which ultimately dominated higher education.

This outcome can hardly be blamed upon benighted politicians who failed to appreciate the requirements of science. The Senators who blocked the Bourgeois proposal had good reason to come to their region's defense. The Departments and municipalities of the "petit-faculties" had been induced to allocate funds to help house those Faculties. Furthermore, by the early 1890s those struggling Faculties were finally getting enough students to justify their existence. That these facts were damaging to the Ministry's position only serves to indicate that the timing was faulty. Radical changes in the educational structure were only possible at an earlier date--certainly no later than the first several Ferry years. Then, the undoubted need for reform together with strong political leadership might have overcome the opposition. By the 1890s vested interests had gained strength and legitimacy and the sense of crisis had disappeared: little wonder, then, that more mundane considerations held sway.

If this analysis is correct, there was only one real opportunity to radically transform French higher education, and it occurred roughly

from 1877 to 1885. After this the system was saddled with the consequences of the steps that had, and had not, been taken. This legacy, it has already been seen, was ambiguous. In the following sections a finer evaluation will be attempted by measuring those accomplishments in the light of the following three decades of higher education in France.

PART V

Assessing the results of the reform of French higher education only a decade after its inception, the assistant secretary of the Société d'Enseignement Supérieur boasted that France had already equaled Germany in relative numbers of students: both countries having one of every 2000 inhabitants enrolled.[1] If this claim is dubious, it is only because it is premature in 1888. At that point French higher education was just embarking on two decades of remarkable growth that compare quite favorably with any other major system in the world. From 1890 to 1910 the number of French students in the Faculties more than doubled, making their relative weight in the population superior to Germany--(respectively, 1/966 to 1/1191).[2] Italy, starting with a similar student population, managed only a 50% increase during this period; while the U.S., with a much larger base and a rapidly expanding population, managed to double its student ranks. When one surveys the growth in students for the French Faculties in a larger time frame from the Second Empire until the end of the Third Republic, the significance of the reform period becomes immediately apparent. The gentle but consistent rise in enrollments that characterized the 1860s turned into complete stagnation during the mid-'70s. After 1880, however, a steady pattern of growth emerged. It accelerated during the early 1890s, then moderated somewhat around the turn of the century before accelerating once again. From 1908 to 1914 the growth in total enrollments was smaller, but after the hiatus of the

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[1] Albert Petit de Juleville, "La Statistique de l'enseignement supérieur en 1889," RIE, 19 (1889), 233-57.

[2] These and the following figures are from the Annuaire Statistique de la France, 1938, 227*-28*, 272*. They are not necessarily reliable, and are offered only as rough indications of relative enrollments.

war a new period of growth commenced.[1] The rate of expansion then accelerated even further for almost a decade (1926-34) before being halted by economic and demographic factors. (See Figure 3)[2]

The reforms of the early 1880s appear to have played an important role in inaugurating and shaping this growth. The rejuvenated Faculties of Letters and Science provided 42% of the enrollment growth from 1880 to 1886, while their own share of that enrollment increased from under 10% to nearly 20%. (See Figure 4) But, thereafter the relationship of the relative enrollments of the Faculties remained rather stable. Letters claimed more than 12% and less than 16% of the students for forty years--from the mid-1880s to the mid-1920s. Its subsequent growth was the result of the influx of female students to higher education who enrolled disproportionarly in Letters. The Faculties of Sciences grew more slowly than Letters, but reached the same proportion of the students by the mid-1890s. After a burst of popularity following the war they slowly settled back to the level of 15%. Throughout this period Law had the largest percentage of students. Although it declined from 35-40% of the students before the

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[1] Superficially the post-war growth appears to be a continuation of the pre-1914 expansion, and has been so interpreted by M. R. Mouton: "L'Enseignement supérieur en France de 1890 à nos jours (étude statistique)" in La Scolarisation en France depuis un siècle, Pierre Chevalier, ed. (Paris: 1968). The error of this view will be evident below.

[2] These figures represent all the students registered in the state Faculties and "Schools" of medicine and pharmacy. They are used to represent the student population of higher education even though, 1) they are consistently inflated (see, Louis Liard, "La Nouvelle Université de Paris," La Revue de Paris, 1908, 3, 449-80; and Ferdinand Lot, "Essais de statistique", op. cit.); and, 2) there were other students receiving post-secondary education in Grandes Ecoles, Catholic Faculties and other independent institutions, plus the preparatory classes in some of the lycées. These two discrepencies tend to cancel each other; but more importantly, the argument developed here depends upon relative numbers of students rather than absolute numbers.

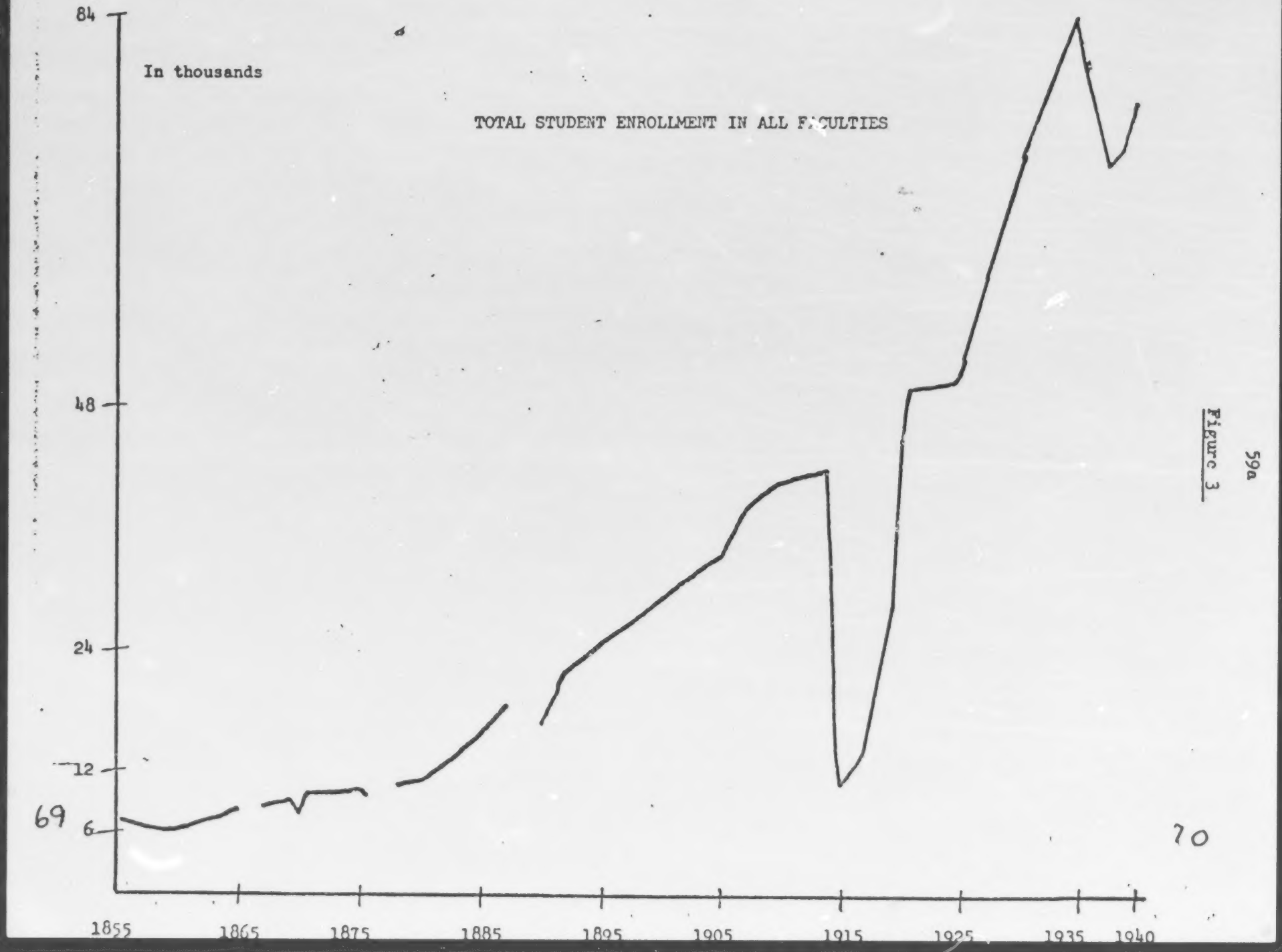

Figure 3

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PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLMENTS PER FACULTY

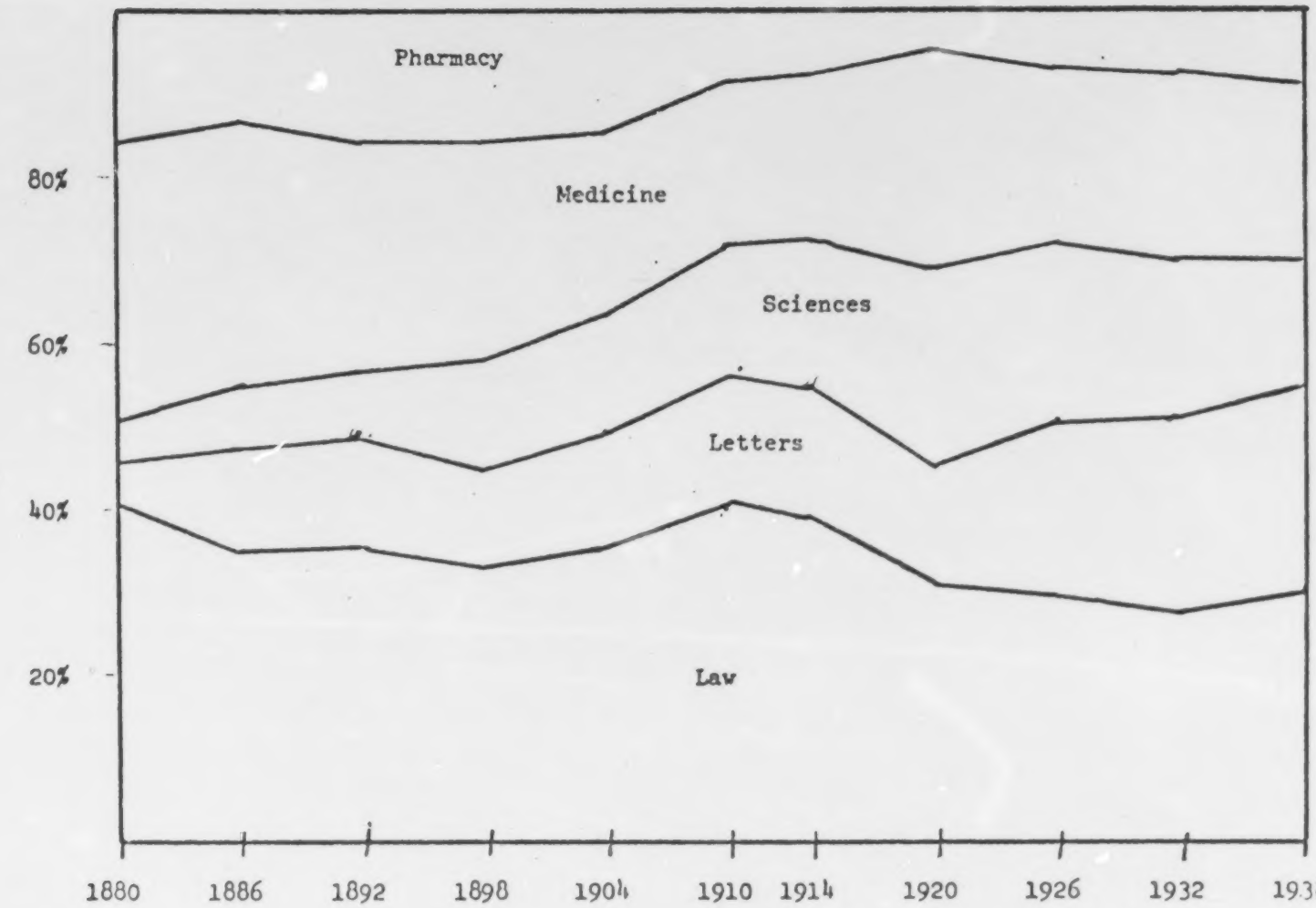

Figure 4

596

war to around 30% shortly afterward, more than 1/3 of the males continued even then to choose to study in the Faculties of Law. It would appear that the percentage of students seeking medical careers decreased in the decade before the war, but these losses were partially recouped in the inter-war period. The only major secular decline occurred in Pharmacy which lost half its share of the student population between 1906 and 1914. Even a substantial enrollment by women between the wars failed to reverse this relative decline. But, with this exception in the least prestigious of the Faculties the growth of French higher education was quite evenly distributed for half a century.

The rehabilitation of the Sciences and Letters Faculties, then, should be credited primarily with establishing their niche within French higher education. Once this was accomplished they benefited, as did the other Faculties, from a general increase in the demand for post-secondary education. The evidence suggests that the improvements in higher education (including the less dramatic reforms in legal and medical education that have not been discussed here) stimulated an immediate increase in students. This, however, was clearly followed by a transformation of the social values accorded to higher education that caused ever increasing numbers of Frenchmen to continue their studies. These values only affected a select portion of the population--those who had earned their baccalauréats; for only they were eligible to enroll in the Faculties.[1] So, the

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[1] By the decree of 28 avril 1910 certain categories of non-baccalauréats were admitted to study in the Faculties. These included the "certificat d'aptitude au professorat dans les écoles normales et dans les écoles primaries supérieures (lettres)." Although this caused consternation among critics like "Agathon" (see below, Part VI), it scarcely altered the existing arrangements. Non-baccalauréats had always been liberally admitted to the Faculties by Ministerial discretion. The numbers involved, both before and after this decree, must have been quite small.

number of students in French higher education depended first upon the number of recent bacheliers and secondly on their inclination to extend their education. And, the latter, it turns out, was the dynamic element.

It is interesting to note that the same number of baccalauréats were being conferred in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1872-75) as there were in the decade before the Great War (circa. 7000/yr.). In between, there were a significantly higher number awarded only in the first half of the 1890s.[1] This remarkable consistency is testimony above all, to a certain kind of social stability between those groups that did, and those that did not, seek secondary education for their children.[2] These two sections of the social spectrum correspond essentially to the bourgeoisie and "le peuple." So, what is at issue in the expansion of higher education is a change in the educational customs of the bourgeoisie.

The extent of these changes should be evident in Figures 5 and 6 which show the relationship between the population of recent bacheliers and, respectively, the number of French students and advanced degrees. The first obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that the growth of French higher education before 1910 was due to an ever larger percentage of

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[1] The quinquennial means for baccalauréats awarded are as follows:

1871-75	6774	1896-1900	7489
1876-80	6409	1901-05	7585
1881-85	6963	1906-10	7034
1886-90	7350	1911-14	7393
1891-95	8597		

[2] The actual number of students in secondary education cannot be determined for most of this period, but the estimates of J. Maillet make it appear that there was little change from 1876 to 1921: "L'Evolution des effectifs de l'enseignement secondaire de 1809-1961" in La Scolarisation en France, op. cit., 115-74. Prost's conclusion that from 1880-1930 "the stability was nearly perfect" (p. 330) seems to extend this period too far.

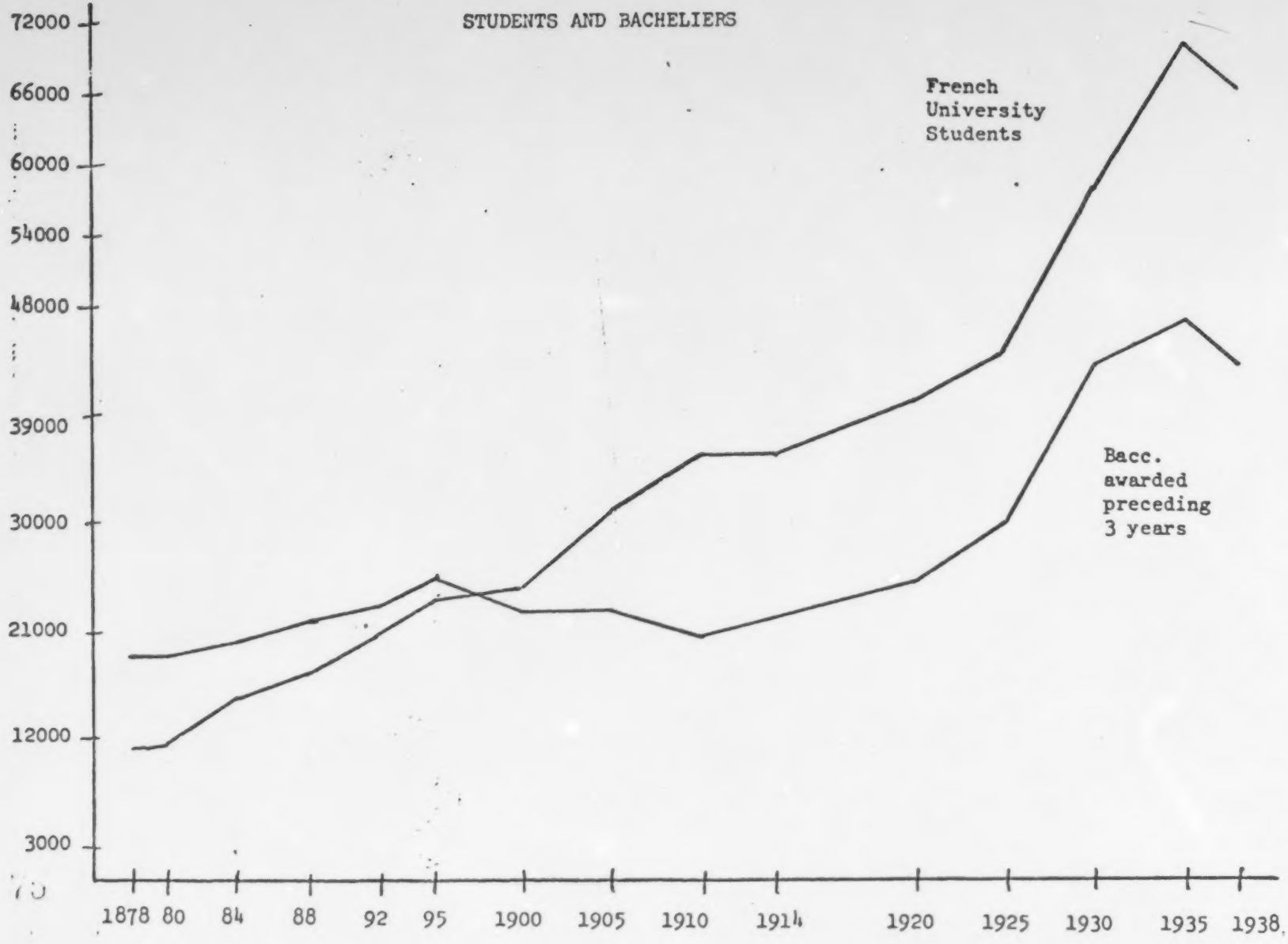
STUDENTS AND BACHELIERS
72000
66000
60000
54000
48000
39000
30000
21000
12000
3000
French
University
Students
Bacc.
awarded
preceding
3 years
1878
80
84
88
92
95
1900
1905
1910
1914
1920
1925
1930
1935
1938

Figure 5

PERCENTAGE OF BACCALAUREAT COHORT TAKING ADVANCED DEGREES:

Licences ès lettres 2 yrs. after Bacc.
Licences ès sciences 2 yrs. " "
Bacc. en droit 2 yrs. " " (1876-1911)
Licences en droit 3 yrs. " " (1920-32)
Docteurs en médecine 4 yrs. " "

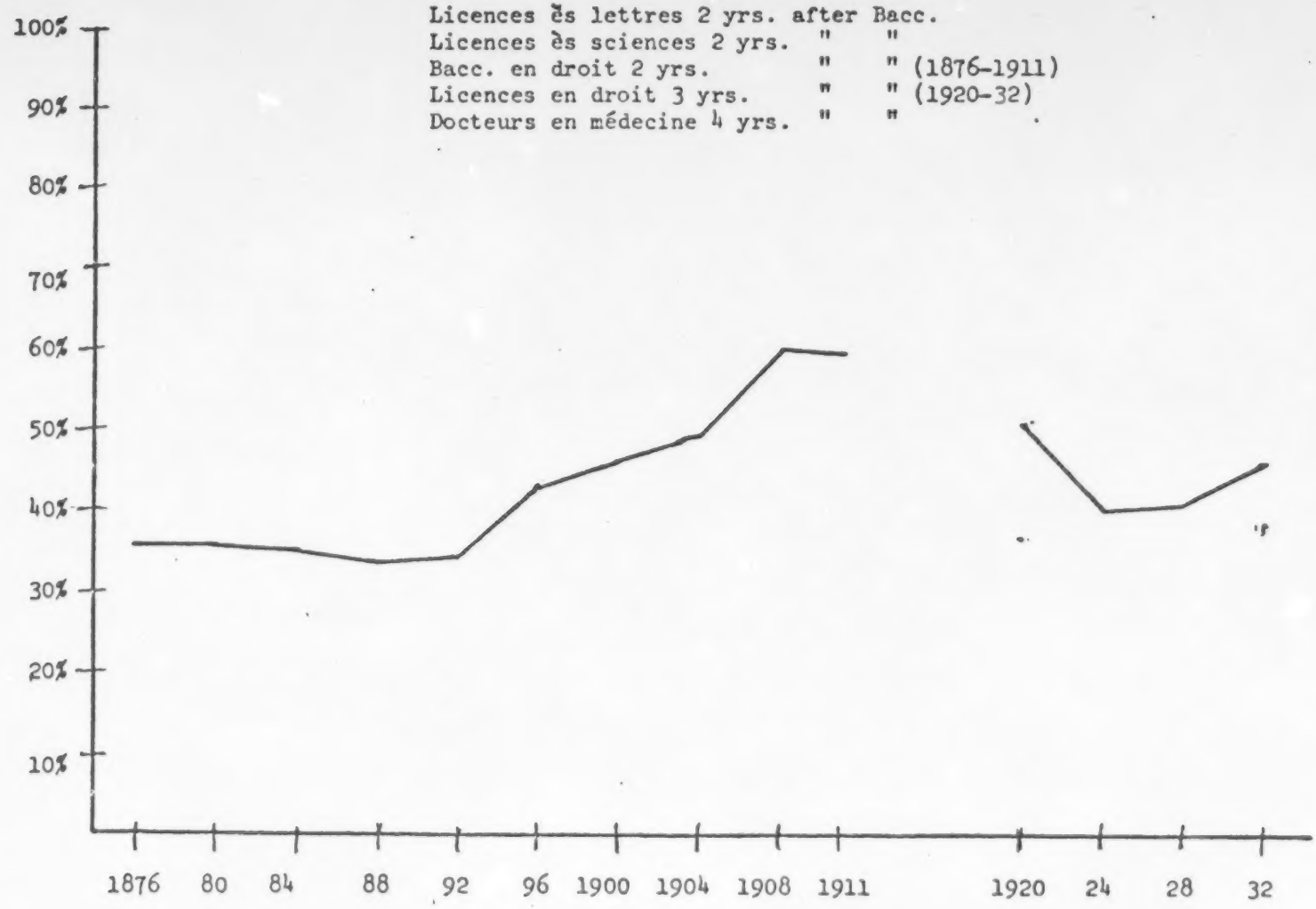

Figure 6

bacheliers continuing their studies. After this point, however, a fairly constant relationship existed, so that enrollments in higher education became dependent upon the number of students completing secondary education. Figure 4 adds an interesting nuance to this picture: even though the ratio of students/bacc. increased regularly, the ratio of advanced degrees/bacc. remained constant until the late 1890s. It then rose to a pre-war plateau that represented approximately 60% of the bacheliers earning an advanced degree. This indicates that one component of the enrollment growth from the mid-90s to 1908 was due to students remaining longer in the Faculties. The decline of the advanced degree/bacc. ratio after the war, at a time when enrollments were again climbing, could be construed as evidence that this expansion, like the original expansion which began in 1880, brought marginal students into the Faculties who were less likely to complete degree programs. This marginality probably has more to do with what Raymond Boudon calls the "secondary effects of social stratification" (in this case, within the bourgeoisie),[1] than it does with intellectual potential. The social expectations of this type of student were apparently largely fulfilled by attendance in higher education, and did not require the certification of an advanced degree. This type of student later became a chronic problem of French higher education, especially with the unprecedented expansion after World War II.[2] In this

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[1] Raymond Boudon, Education, Opportunity and Social Inequality, (N.Y.: 1974), 28-31.

[2] Cf. the description of this contemporary problem in John Ardagh, The New French Revolution, (N.Y.: 1969), 322-26. To deal with this problem a one-year propédeutique was established in 1948 to precede study for the licence. In 1966 this was lengthened to a two-year program culminating in a Diplôme universitaire d'études litteraires (DUEL) or scientifique (DUES).

light, the high advanced degree/bacc. ratio on the eve of the First World War stands as a remarkable accomplishment of the French educational system. But, it is a testimony, above all, of social stability underpinning that system. Between 1880 and 1914 the French bourgeoisie developed a taste (social expectation) first for some advanced education, and then for the degrees which signified the completion of some segment of that education.

Perhaps the most important consequence of this social stability for higher education was the inherent limitations it placed upon the entire system. Once the maximum percentage of bacheliers entering higher education had been reached, and once the maximum percentage of students persevering for degrees had been reached, the system could expand no more. And, this is precisely what happened after 1907. Both components of the previous growth reached maximal levels (for which the absolute values cannot be accurately determined), so that further growth had to come from extraneous sources. The small absolute growth that did occur from 1907 to 1914 was due to more women and foreigners enrolling. The female student population, of course, had a great potential for growth, but only on the condition of a profound change in the social expectations of women in French society. Figure 7 indicates that such a change had barely begun by 1914.

So, French higher education entered a period of stasis after 1907 which lasted only until 1914. World War I then emptied the Faculties of students, and afterward the more profound effects of the war precluded the re-establishment of the former equilibrium. The initial legacy of the war to be felt by the universities was a large backlog of potential

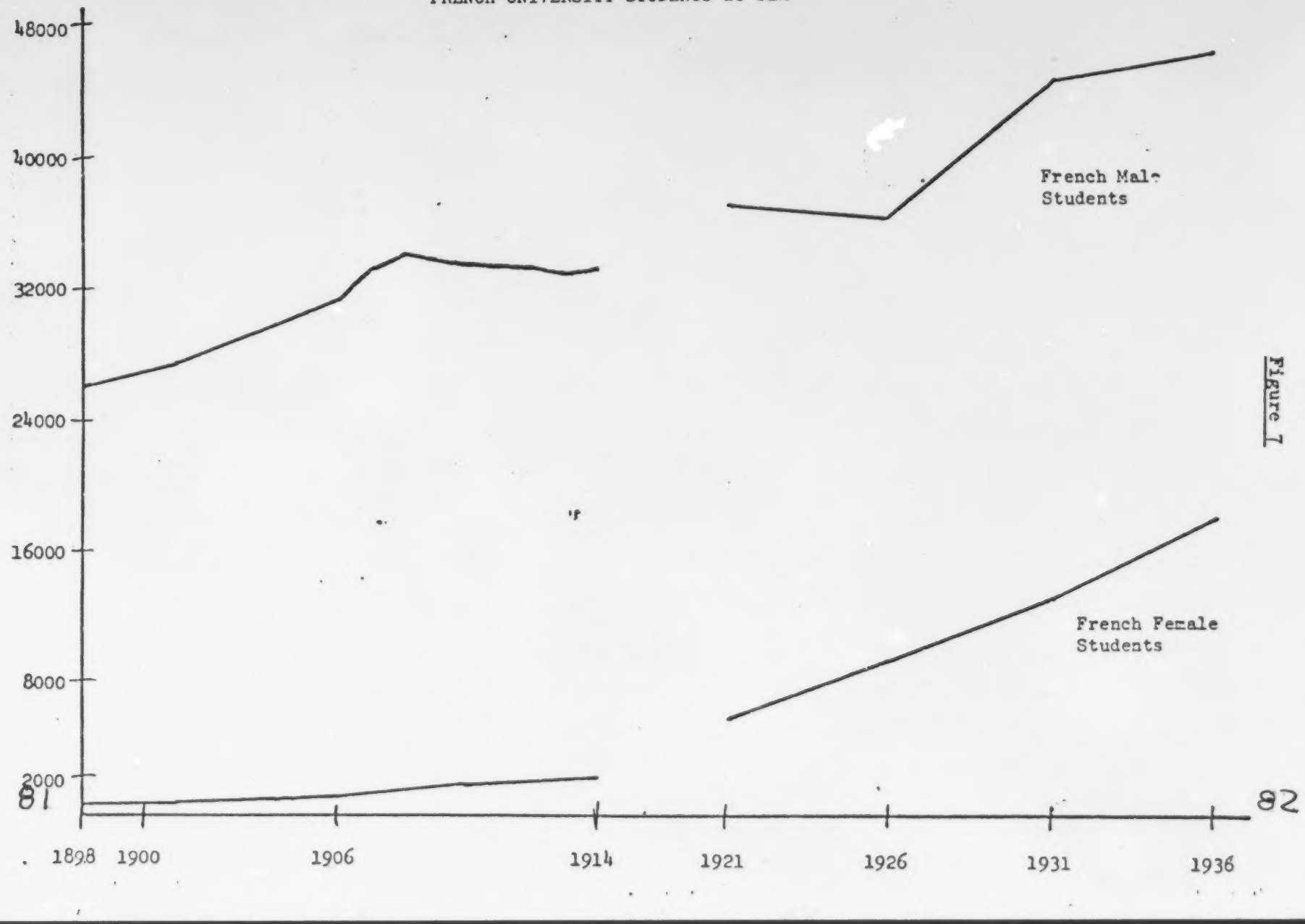
FRENCH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY SEX
48000
40000
32000
24000
16000
8000
2000
French Male Students
French Female Students
1898
1900
1906
1914
1921
1926
1931
1936
81
82

Figure 7

students which followed the demobilization of the army. This, however, was a temporary phenomenon. Far more important was the permanent alteration worked by the war in the social expectations of portions of French society which increased the demand for secondary and higher education.[1] This change was most immediately evident in the rapid growth in female students. The post-war period may thus be regarded as the real beginning of the development of higher education for women in France. The more general effect of this change, however, is less easily discerned, because of the lag between committing a child to secondary education (at age 11) and his or her eventual baccalauréat. But, beginning in the mid-1920s the number of baccalauréats awarded increased markedly, and this increase was fully reflected in university enrollments (Figure 5). A further indication of a greater demand for educational opportunities that would produce high social status was the controversy surrounding secondary education between the wars. Proponents of democratization (école unique) failed to abolish the distinction between primary and secondary education, but did eventually manage to eliminate tuition in the lycées and collèges.[2] All this reflected pressures which were broadening the role of secondary education in France, and this consequently implied a change in the social relations of the university. Thus, the equilibrium of the pre-war years was permanently disrupted.

As higher education became the normal sequel to the baccalauréat in pre-war France, this pattern began to be reflected in French educational

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[1] Maillet, 154-56.

[2] John Talbott, The Politics of Educational Reform in France, 1918-40, (Princeton: 1969).

thought. Durkheim, for example, taught future teachers at the Sorbonne that the purpose of secondary education was "to awaken the speculative faculties, to exercise them, and to strengthen them in general without ever engaging them in any professional task." It was the task of higher education to prepare people for the professions by directing this mental prowess toward mastering a practical body of knowledge.[1] Durkheim, regarding this relationship as inherent in the two types of education, failed to appreciate the relativity of his view. What had always been partially true of French education became the dominant ideology of the system around the turn of the century. A study of the evolution of the purposes of French secondary education has discovered the emergence of a striking consensus around 1905 on the value of individual refinement for its own sake.[2] It seems evident that this self-image was instrumental in defending the social exclusiveness and intellectual immobility of secondary education for at least a quarter of a century. This raises the question of whether the image of higher education constrained its development in a similar way.

The problem of raising the level of studies in the Faculties of Letters had, in the broadest sense, two dimensions. With regard to the production of knowledge it involved the development of specialization and professionalization within the disciplines. This involved, as well, the recognition of the disciplines' universalistic criteria of merit by the Ministry of Public Instruction, so that a scholar's position within

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[1] Emile Durkheim, L'Evolution pédagogique en France, (Paris: 1969), 360-66.

[2] Viviane Isambart-Jamati, Crises de la société, crises de l'enseignement, (Paris: 1970).

the educational system would be consistent with his professional prestige. With regard to transmitting knowledge to students, the problem became one of adapting the courses and examinations to the exigencies of advanced study. Progress in both these areas obviously had to be gradual. Nevertheless, on the eve of World War I, some three decades after the reform period, no one could doubt that advances had been made.

The development of the disciplines took place originally and most impressively in Paris. The Faculty of Letters there was considerably larger than any other, and consequently could accommodate more specialized positions. More important, however, was the concentration of other resources in the intellectual capital of France: publishing houses, professional societies, the Institut and the Collège de France, and probably most crucial, research facilities like the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. Nevertheless, the embodiment of the disciplines in the Faculties, and the influence of the structure of higher education on the growth of those disciplines, can be most clearly perceived from the provinces.

All the provincial Letters Faculties possessed by the late 1860s identical sets of five chairs which corresponded with the five-fold division of examination subjects (see above Part I, p. 3). The expansion of these Faculties began in the 1870s before they had attracted a significant number of students. This expansion, then, must be interpreted as a matter of government policy which was not tied to student demand. Furthermore, it was this process of expansion that allowed disciplines to first become defined, and then to become specialized. Each area, however, had a different capacity for growth and differentiation. This should be apparent in Figure 8 which depicts the growth of the Letters Faculty at Toulouse.

Figure 8

GROWTH OF THE FACULTY OF LETTERS OF TOULOUSE, 1865 - 1914

1865	1878	1888	1898	1914
Philosophy	--->	--->	--->	--->
	History of Philosophy*	xxxx		
		Science of Educ.*	--->	Phil. Social and Ped.(*)
			Philosophy	xxxx
History and Geography	--->	History	--->	Ancient History
			Auxiliary Sc. of History*	---> *
		Hist. of Meridional France	--->	--->
		History*	Modern and Cont. H.	--->
			History of Art*	---> *
				Prehist. Archeology
		Geography*	--->	--->
Ancient Lit.	Greek Lang. and Lit.	--->	--->	--->
	Latin Lang. and Lit.	--->	--->	--->
	Gr. and L. Antiquities	--->	--->	--->
		Greek Lit.*	--->	--->
		Gr. and L. Institutions*	xxxx	
		Grammar	Latin Lang. and Lit.*	--->
French Lit.	--->	--->	--->	--->
		Meridional Lang and Lit**	---> **	---> **
			French Lit.*	--->
Foreign Lit.	--->	--->	--->	xxxx
		Spanish**	---> **	---> **
		English*	---> *	--->
		German*	---> *	--->

This faculty was of median size (i.e., about half of the total remaining teaching positions in Letters were in larger more differentiated faculties--viz. Paris, Lyon and Bordeaux--and half were in smaller ones), and reveals a typical pattern of evolution.

The study of French language and literature does not show any need to specialize during this period. "Littérature étrangère," on the other hand, was an awkward position that was gradually replaced by positions in the different modern languages. Philosophy possessed little inherent capacity for growth: history of philosophy lacked vitality as a specialty, while pedagogy and "social philosophy" (sociology) were actually striving toward separate identities. History and Classical Studies were the only two areas to exhibit considerable growth, but each led to different results. Classics was the first area to expand in the Faculties of Letters, but this expansion did not lead to more than rudimentary specialization. Ancient Literature was separated into Greek and Latin, but the catch-all chair in "Greek and Latin Antiquities" established at Toulouse is typical of the unspecialized chairs established during the 1870s and 1880s. More significantly, no further differentiation took place despite the addition of new positions. Serious classical studies consequently remained confined to Parisian institutions--not only the Faculty of Letters, but especially the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and the Collège de France (and outside the country at the Schools of Athens and Rome). In other words, they were lodged in research rather than teaching institutions. History first acquired a separate adademic identity by being everywhere separated from geography--(it later also sloughed-off archeology and the history of art). The establishment of distinct specialties occurred in

Paris as early as the 1880s when two senior and four junior positions augmented the original two chairs in Ancient and Modern History. This evolution evidently affected Toulouse in the 1890s. The end result was the secure establishment of a vigorous history profession within French higher education by the twentieth century.

The accomplishments of the French historians are rather well known; what is startling in the foregoing analysis is that they were the only discipline to become institutionalized within the Faculties of Letters before the Great War. In every other subject there was an absence of specialization which clearly indicated the predominance of teaching over scholarship--teaching, moreover, which seems to have remained at a fairly rudimentary level. This was particularly the case with classical languages where the close ties with secondary education (through the system of examinations) precluded the penetration of philological scholarship into the conference rooms. Disciplines not included in the examinations faced quite different problems, both in training professionals and in finding suitable places for them in the Faculties of Letters. A would-be sociologist like Emile Durkheim or Célestin Bouglé, for example, had to first pass the agrégation in philosophy, and then address his subject directly while pursuing a Doctorat d'Etat. For those who completed this difficult sequence with distinction, the Ministry could probably find a position related to their specialty. Thus, in 1914 there were four sociologists teaching in the Faculties of Letters: three of the positions (including Social Philosophy at Toulouse) were directly linked to pedagogy, while the fourth was a privately endowed chair in the "History of Social Economy" in Paris. Although they were able to profess sociology

as well as their other specialty (e.g. pedagogy), they were responsible for preparing and examining students in philosophy. Sociology, nevertheless, developed remarkably in pre-war France; but this development was due to the efforts of a few individuals, and especially to extra-academic institutions like Durkheim's Année Sociologique. The structure of French higher education was, if anything, an impediment, as should be evident from the stagnation of the discipline after World War I.[1]

The professionalism of history was fortified considerably by the research and training centers at non-teaching institutions. They also had a compelling model to imitate in the German historical profession. Finally, the study of French history, in particular, received impetus from the patriotic fervor which followed the Franco-Prussian War.[2] Nevertheless, credit is due to the Ministry of Public Instruction for recognizing and assimilating the universalistic criteria of this nascent profession. The proliferation of specialized history posts after 1890 is testimony of this, as is the career advancements of those scholars who espoused the science of history. In this respect, history was only the chief beneficiary, because of its relative maturity as a discipline, of a general policy of encouraging scholarship. After the reforms this became the most important criterion for academic advancement in the Faculties. Indeed, if this had not been the policy the newer disciplines

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[1] Viktor Karady, "Innovation, institutionalization de l'innovation et naissance de la sociologie en France," Rapport scientifique, Centre de sociologie Européenne (A.T.P. du CNRS n° 6348), (Paris: 1974); Terry N. Clark, Prophets and Patrons, (Cambridge, Mass.: 1973); and Roger L. Geiger, "History, Sociology and the University in France," Minerva, forthcoming. Psychology was in the same situation as sociology. Geography was the most favored of the new disciplines with a small, but secure niche in the curriculum.

[2] Cf. William R. Keylor, Academy and Community: the Foundation of the French Historical Profession, 1870-1914, (Cambridge, Mass.: 1975).

might have found no foothold at all.[1]

It would seem, then, that the basic reason why other disciplines were not able to emulate the development of history lay in the structure of French higher education. History possessed the requisite space to expand and mature, but philology, sociology, philosophy and psychology did not. The licence--agrégation sequence remained a constraint upon the establishment of newer disciplines and the sophistication of the established ones even after the initial reform period. During the remainder of the pre-war period a succession of changes were made in the programs to overcome this chronic problem. The results, as with so many of the reforms, were ambiguous.

The best example of how the desire to introduce flexibility and hautes études into the curriculum of the Letters Faculties was inhibited by the exigencies of the system is provided by the history of the Diplome d'Etudes Supérieur (D.E.S.). This innovation was first instituted at the Sorbonne in 1886. This Faculty diploma was available to anyone who followed courses regularly for a year, and who produced an original research paper under the direction of a professor. This diploma needed no examinations, fulfilled no requirements and conferred no rights. In fact, it was originally justified as recognition of the work of students who were not destined for professional teaching careers.[2] The first year it was available it was sought by only six students, but

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[1] Cf. Prost, 234. The data assembled by Seabold is consistent with the growing importance of scholarship for academic advancement; however, this issue deserves separate study.

[2] Beauchamp, IV, 253-55; "Allocation de M. Ernest Lavisse", RIE 11, (1886), 381-87.

the next year its supporters justified it in even stronger terms: unlike the licence or agrégation this title was based upon studies necessarily pursued in the Faculty and upon an original piece of research.[1] In 1894 a standardized DES was officially created in history and geography, and made a requirement for the agrégation. Its rationale now shifted to the importance of scientific training for future universitaires. The ends of the agrégation, it was carefully pointed out, had not altered in the least. Rather, they had been divided between two separate examinations. The first, required for the DES in conjunction with the research paper, guaranteed the scientific competence of the candidate; the concours for the agrégation (taken the following year) would then be devoted to the pedagogical competence of the aspiring professor. Hopefully, performances in both areas would improve by this arrangement, but the professional training of future historians and geographers could not help but benefit by this requirement of directed research. Its success and its popularity soon became evident.[2] Nevertheless, it was not until 1904 that the DES was extended to the other Letters subjects and to the Faculties of Sciences.[3] Thus, more than two decades after the Sorbonne created its original diplomas, the DES became an institutionalized requirement for personal research by aspiring universitaires.

The inordinate amount of time that elapsed before this popular and badly needed innovation was fully implemented is unfortunately representative

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1 "Discourse de M. Lavisse", RIE, 14, (1887), 444-48.

2 RIE, 34 (1897), 193-250. This survey also seems to indicate that the more advanced the level of studies, the more pronounced the domination of Paris: e.g. in 1896-97 80 DES were awarded in Paris, compared to 63 in the provincial Faculties of Letters.

3 Beauchamp, VI, 613-21.

of post-reform higher education in France. Another typical feature is the conspicuous leadership of the relatively mature history profession in this development. However, the most significant aspect is the priority which the pedagogical function of higher education assumed in the DES: this changed its nature in at least two respects. The certification of agrégés could never take place as casually as the awarding of the original Sorbonne diplomas. The programs of 1894 and 1904 consequently included comprehensive examinations as well as a piece of original research. Rigidity thus replaced flexibility, and one of the original purposes of the diploma--to bring students into the conferences of the Faculties-- was also lost: the combination of preparing a research paper and examinations during one short academic year left students no time for attending classes.[1] Secondly, the DES made the agrégation program more specialized and more professionally oriented. While this seems to have been absolutely essential for the future maîtres of French higher education, and, within limits, desirable for future lycée professors, it held little attraction for the growing number of students not destined for careers in the Université. The original Sorbonne diploma was designed to fulfill the needs of this latter constituency; instead they became increasingly alienated from the reformed Faculties, as will be seen in Part Six.

In general, the case of the DES seems to show that ad hoc measures designed to improve the system were essentially assimilated to the purposes of the system, rather than bringing about its fundamental alteration.

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[1] Ferdinand Lot, "Ou en est la Faculté des Lettres de Paris", La Grande Revue, 75, 5 (1912), 578-79.

The evolution of the programs for the licence ès lettres reveals the same situation. By 1894 there was a manifest desire "to develop the scientific life within the Faculties, and to encourage personal work among the students."[1] But, there was also a clear consensus to preserve the classical culture générale for this degree. In an attempt to reconcile these cross-purposes in an eight month program, some adjustments were made in the 1880 licence. The degree remained, however, an advanced baccalauréat for most students. The specific areas of study did not make any significant advances against culture générale until 1907, when separate licences were created for each area (although they still contained a vestigal Latin translation). The programs of the new licences were predicated upon the secondary curriculum, and were consequently encyclopedic in scope. This not only precluded significant specialization, but guaranteed superficial and mediocre performances. Furthermore, the best hope of covering all this material in one academic year lay in cramming, rather than attending courses.[2]

The DES and the new licences, then, were successes in that the programs they replaced were unquestionably worse. They failed, however, to make advanced and flexible instruction the rule instead of the exception

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[1] Beauchamp, V, 453.

[2] Beauchamp, VI, 1007-11. For example, the history and geography licence after the 1907 reform consisted of the following parts:

written (14 hours)	1. Latin translation 2. History composition	3. Composition on selected course 4. Textual criticism
oral (15 min. each)	1. Ancient History 2. Medieval History 3. Modern History 4. Contemporary History	5. Geography 6. Selected univ. course 7. Selected work (history or geography) 8. English or German work

in the Faculties of Letters. Since the problems confronting these Faculties were by no means insoluble, it can be argued that this need not have been the case. In fact, close by in the Faculties of Sciences they had an instructive model for dealing with some of these difficulties.

In 1893 a certificat of study for physics, chemistry and natural science (PCN) was created for the specific purpose of providing future medical students with basic scientific training in the Faculties of Sciences. It soon proved to have a variety of uses: it became virtually obligatory preparation for French bacheliers and foreign students intending to study science in France; and it was opened to those holding a brevet supérieur from the primary system.[1] Thus, it not only prepared for future medical or technical study, but it filled a gap between the deficient secondary training in science and the increasinly advanced level of scientific instruction in the Faculties. Shortly afterward (1896) the licence ès sciences was refashioned to make it dependent upon the courses taught in the Faculties. Instead of requiring a common, complex examination, it consisted of three "certificats" that signified competence in any three subject areas.[2] Control over the preparation of future teachers was maintained by requiring of them certain coherent combinations. Only those who wished to prepare for secondary teaching needed to concern themselves with those requirements. The remainder—who were soon, in fact, the majority—could study for whatever purposes

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[1] Paul Appell, "La Faculté des Sciences de L'Université de Paris", La Revue de Paris, 17, 6, (1910), 98-120. A parallel program stressing general mathematics was created later.

[2] By 1910 there were 23 certificats offered. Each required an oral, written and practical exam (ibid., 116).

they chose. Thus, by making their degree program open and flexible the Faculties of Sciences were able to serve the ends of basic science, applied science and teacher education at the same time.

The Faculties of Letters eventually did copy the example of their colleagues in science. The licence ès lettres was converted to a combination of certificats in 1920, and a year-long "propédeutique" was instituted as a prelude to study for the licence after World War II. If these belated imitations attest to the superiority of the science programs, the quarter century and half century required for their adoptions are testimony of the immobility of the Faculties of Letters. The reasons for this immobility have already been explored. It remains to be seen in the final section what resulted as the social and intellectual changes described above generated increasing pressure upon this rigid structure.

PART VI

Scarcely a decade after the creation of French universities, their architect, Louis Liard, was able to survey the accomplishment from his semi-retirement with serene pride.[1] Not only had the University of Paris regained its ancient prestige, but, having been reborn in the tradition of the Revolution, it was now a child of science, dedicated to instruction on the highest level, under the benevolent tutelage of the state. All this, he correctly judged, was the fruition of the reforms begun in the early 1880s. Yet, within two years of this complacent assessment the legitimacy of French higher education was to receive its most serious challenge since the 1870s. Morover, Liard's pride, the Nouvelle Sorbonne, was to become the symbol of the deficiencies of the system. While these criticisms assailed the university from without, it also faced a less spectacular, but in some ways more disquieting critique from within its walls. Even though these two attacks completely contradicted each other, when taken together they reveal the impasse that education in the Faculties of Letters had reached by the eve of World War I.

The author of the former attack was a pseudonymous Agathon--actually two young journalists, Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde. Their original article on "La Sorbonne contre la culture classique" (1910) provoked such controversy that they elaborated their arguments in further pieces which were quickly united in a book.[2] The substance of their charges

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[1] "La Nouvelle Université de Paris," Revue de Paris, 1908, 3, 449-80.

[2] L'Espirit de la Nouvelle Sorbonne (Paris: 1911). See also, Phyllis H. Stock, "Students versus the University in Pre-World War Paris", French Historical Studies, VII, 1 (1971), 93-110.

were that, 1) humanistic studies had been perverted by a misguided appropriation of the methods of the physical sciences; 2) excessive specialization had precluded any unified understanding in the humanities; and 3) as a result of excessive democratic enthusiasm, the elite were being sacrificed to the interests of the masses.[1] The result of these errors had been to extinguish the very qualities that had hitherto been the pride of French education--clarity of thought and expression, the ability to grasp and synthesize general ideas, and especially the cultivation of individual genius and originality. In their stead the Nouvelle Sorbonne had exalted the dull, repetitive operations of scientifically gathering and sorting facts--tasks better suited for the mediocre minds the school was now training.

Agathon was in fact inveighing against precisely those hautes études which had been so carefully nurtured in the reformed universities. The foremost villians were Gustave Lanson, who tried (perhaps excessively) to bring the techniques of philology and history to the study of French literature, and Durkheim, who was working to disassociate sociology from philosophy. However, close behind them were the professional historians who were endeavoring to scientifically study the past. With hindsight it would not be difficult to counter Agathon's anachronistic and sentimental charges; yet, such an exercise would be pointless. The significance of Agathon's critique lay in the resonance it had in French public opinion. Those hostile to the university for political, religious or

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[1] All these criticisms were not original to Agathon. The authors included many well-worn charges, including excessive German influence, the arguments against the baccalauréat reform of 1902, and the hints of a conspiratorial cabal directing French education.

other reasons applauded Agathon for articulating and vindicating their own smoldering resentments. Less predictable was the substantial dissatisfaction among Sorbonne students which suddenly became visible, and for which Agathon quickly began to act as spokesman. Even the Sorbonne professors who defended their university had to make some embarassing concessions, for they shared many of the values championed by Agathon.[1] Certainly, then, the authors had touched upon something of fundamental importance for French higher education. But, what? This controversy appears even more curious in the light of a contemporary condemnation of the situation from quite a different point of view.

Ferdinand Lot was a medieval historian, trained at the Ecole des Chartes. As an avocation, however, he became a relentless critic of French higher education. Representing no constituency, and distinctly unpopular with the Revue internationale de l'enseignement, he nevertheless seems to have become an unacknowledged force in French education simply through the acuity of his observations and the cogency of his opinions. Only two years after Agathon's debut, he provided a different view of the academic pretentions of the Nouvelle Sorbonne.[2]

Lot set out to demonstrate that two-thirds of the "inscribed" students were not actual students, that two-thirds of those who were did

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[1] Some of the controversy that Agathon provoked was included in L'Espirit, pp. 207-373. Agathon analysed and expressed the sentiments of French youth (carefully selected) in Les Jeunes gens d'aujourd'hui (Paris: 1913).

[2] "Ou en est la Faculté de Lettres de Paris?", La Grande Revue, 1912, 5, 369-84; 577-97. Lot published L'Enseignement supérieur en France in 1892 and a succession of articles on the subject thereafter. Although his criticisms were always judged to be too severe, many of his suggestions were later adopted.

not attend classes, and that the remainder did poorly in their studies! One might quibble with his figures, but his case was still well taken.[1] The basic cause of this situation lay in the examinations which asked too much of a student in too little time, and which were not grounded in the instruction provided by the Faculty. The inescapable result was that students had to prepare themselves outside of the Faculty by cramming (bachoter), and could seldom attain more than mediocre results.

It is not necessary to penetrate into the details of Lot's argument to see that it contradicted much of Agathon's case. The mediocrity condemned by the latter could hardly be due to an excess of science if students were largely ignoring the classrooms of the Sorbonne. Nor could the threatened inundation by the masses be taken seriously if there were at most 2500 bona fide letters students in all of France.[2] However, once some of Agathon's impressionistic arguments are dismissed, the legitimate concerns become more apparent. Agathon was expressing in crude and often overdrawn terms the disillusionment of the non-professional student with the Faculties of Letters. Having no desire to become lycée professors, these students nevertheless sought higher education primarily because of rising social expectations. As the analysis in Part V has already established, after 1907 a maximal percentage of bacheliers were continuing on to higher education and quite often to licence degrees. They had little understanding of, nor sympathy toward, the

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[1] Of 3310 students officially recorded in the Paris Faculty of Letters (1910-11), Lot estimated that 946 were actually seeking advanced degrees. By checking attendance sheets, he further calculated that approximately one-third of the licence students in history attended classes. One-half of the successful candidates (1911) apparently never entered a classroom. Ibid., 369,372, 374, 382.

[2] Lot's estimate: ibid., 597.

"science" their maîtres were endeavoring to build. On the other hand, they were very much concerned that higher education should retain its social exclusiveness. This is obvious in their emphasis upon elites, and their consistent condemnation of such measures as the equivalence of modern and classical baccalauréats (Reform of 1902), and the admission of non-bacheliers to the Faculties.[1] More subtly, they encouraged class distinctions by lauding the ineffable virtues of culture générale that were supposed to be inculcated in the lycées, and demanding that the Faculties of Letters accept this as their goal as well.

What Agathon was advocating, then, was a French approximation of an American liberal arts education. On this point Ferdinand Lot was in substantial agreement. He argued that the study of the humanities, broadly construed, in the university was necessary to complete the limited education that the lycées could offer. To this end he advocated a more rigorous licence based upon certificats, as in the Faculties of Sciences.[2] Lot was one of the few to recognize that beyond the licence is where professional preparation ought to begin, and that there the needs of secondary teachers and university teachers sharply diverged. For the former alone he would reserve the agrégation, while for future scholars of the university he advocated a research-oriented diplôme d'études supérieures as a prelude to the doctorat.

Both Agathon and Lot made their recommendations with little hope that they would be sympathetically received. Agathon, with characteristic

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[1] L'Espirit, 119-45; see also above, p. 60, note 1.

[2] Op. cit., 583-89. Agathon recommended establishing a literary PCN dedicated to culture générale, which would precede more specialized study for the licence (L'Espirit, 195-202).

hyperbole, felt that a handful of men, "united in a kind of positivistically inspired mysticism," had forcibly imposed their spirit upon literary education in France. Lot charged that even though "the French system of education is one of the most bizarre in the world [,] most of the titular professors found it admirable since they themselves were products of it."[1] So, each in their own way recognized that the existing situation was supported by a comfortable consensus within the Faculties of Letters. Consequently, there was little immediate possibility of changing the system to accommodate the advanced, specialized training that Lot urged, or a general, humanistic education of the type favored by Agathon.

In the final analysis, then, these two quite divergent evaluations of the Letters Faculties one generation after reform show a degree of convergence. Both found French higher education beset by rigidity and organizational torpor. The preceding account of these reforms and the subsequent development of the Letters Faculties should make evident why this was the case. Two paramount facts stand out. During the Ferry years higher education was altered to solve the immediate problems facing the Faculties. And secondly, as part of that reform, preponderant organizational power was allocated to academicians both in the Faculties and in the Ministry of Public Instruction. These actions considered by themselves were highly commendable; they only had pathological consequences because of a condition that did not change--the inherent centralization of French education. All of the issues with which this study has dealt are closely related to the forces produced by these three factors.

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[1] L'Espirit, 23; "Ou en est la Faculté...", 582.

The reforms of the 1880s consecrated the Faculties of Letters to preparing future teachers for the licence and agrégation examinations. When the time came to transcend that narrow function, the system proved incapable of innovation. Initiative could only be taken at the center, in the Ministry of Public Instruction. But, there the top personnel complacently accepted the goals of the system. Out in the Faculties the professors possessed no possibility of significant innovation; they did, however, have considerable power to block any attempts to alter the status-quo. The autonomy delegated to the Faculties thus became only a negative force, chiefly utilized to defend droits acquis.

Literary education nevertheless continued to develop after 1885 despite these obstacles, because the system still had goals to fulfill. However, the developments that were, and those that were not feasible were largely determined by the matrix of forces established before that date. Thus, universities were formally established, but the prerogatives of the Faculties were not eroded in the process. New degrees were created, but the priority of the pedagogical function made the new examinations very much like the old ones. The historical profession flourished, but academic disciplines which did not have a niche in the traditional curriculum made irregular, and generally meager progress. Finally, there was an efflorescence of hautes études in Paris where the largest and most talented Letters Faculty coexisted with the research facilities of the Université, but in the provinces, where the Faculties were on their own, the seeds of scholarship fell on barren ground. Hence, the very ambiguity that has plagued the evaluation of French higher education throughout this study is rooted in a structure that allowed certain

developments while precluding others.

The potentialities of this structure, then, were determined by internal rather than external factors. Thus, the impressive enrollment growth of French higher education had virtually no impact on the Faculties of Letters. They lacked the flexibility to implement new programs of the type advocated by Lot or Agathon which might have better met the diversified needs of their more heterogeneous clientele. That these students nevertheless continued to enroll provides an important clue to the relationship of the new universities to French society. Except for those students seeking a career in the Université, matriculation in the Faculties of Letters served to provide a meritocratic veneer for the "elite" whose social selection was already guaranteed by the secondary schools. What they were supposedly taught in the Faculties was irrelevant, so long as it was culturally respectable and relatively inaccessable. In fact, Agathon's anxieties concerned the possible threat to just those qualities. So, it would seem that French literary education could fulfill its social function whether the history it purveyed was rhetorical or scientific, or whether the edition of Virgil used was accurate or not.

This raises a final question. Is the quality of higher education as important for the well-being of a society as Renan, Ferry, Dumont and Liard believed it to be? To answer this it must be recognized that education is far more the product of society than an active agent in shaping it. France on the eve of World War I was a deeply stratified society, and the universities, as bourgeois institutions, merely reflected this fact. More disquieting were the patterns of immobility which seemed to be settling over most aspects of French life. Not only was there little

desire for social progress, but economic and intellectual progress seemed threatened as well. After the war the implications of this ossification would be fully evident. However, before the war the educated youth of France in large measure committed themselves to preserving existing social relations by repudiating the Republic and its values--by recoiling from the social and intellectual evolution that they feared those values would portend. In their reaction, some followed Péguy into religious mysticism; others joined Maurras in the political demimonde of monarchism; and many applauded the neo-romantic philosophy of Bergson. For the same reason, they all became enthralled by the nationalist revival which preceded the war. Insofar as these were movements in the university and among the university-trained, they constitute a failure of the reformed system of higher education to transmit the rationalist heritage which, above all, had inspired that reform in the first place. One cannot say with any assurance that better universities would have contributed to a France that was less bellicose, more intellectually tolerant, and capable of reconciling its deep social antagonisms. But, it seems evident that a higher educational system that certified an elite without educating them could only exacerbate these conditions.

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